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Saturday March 9 1996

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The Guardian INTERNATIONAL

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NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

46,496

Other Lives

Michael White on the up-and-coming Tory generation

Outlook, page 12

Motor racing

Formula One: the circus begins in Melbourne

Sport, page 12

Jan Morris on Cairo

In a family embrace

Outlook, page 19

Jitters after rate cut

Larry Elliott, Michael White and Margaret Hughes

THE Government was last night hoping to reap political dividends from a pick-up in the economy after its third post-Budget cut in base rates triggered a reduction in the cost of home loans to a 30-year low.

With a homeowner with a £50,000 mortgage now £40 a month better off than in August last year, the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, underlined yesterday that the Government sees the economy as its best hope of overturning Labour's seemingly impregnable poll lead over the next 12 months.

However, the prospects of further cuts in interest rates — seen as crucial by some economists and most of industry to sustaining consumer confidence — were hit by a bout of jitters in the City and

0.24 points to 7.25 per cent — the lowest since 1966.

Other leading lenders quickly followed suit, although the Nationwide — which has already announced a new rate of 6.99 per cent from April — has temporarily left its rates unchanged.

With the spring house buying season about to begin, the Halifax was cautiously upbeat about the prospects for property prices. It believes rates will be cut by a further 0.25 or 0.5 points before the election.

Adair Turner, the director-general of the CBI, welcomed the reduction, although bodies representing car dealers and house builders said the boost to consumer demand should have been bigger.

However, in the City, fears that the Chancellor may have started to play politics with the economy had created a downbeat mood even before Wall Street crumbled by more than 100 points on the back of figures for employment growth that all but ruled out a cut in US interest rates.

The FTSE 100 index closed almost 50 points lower at 3710.3, government bonds lost almost 12, and dealers in the money markets were predicting that yesterday's cut in interest rates might be the last in the present cycle.

Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, strongly disputed suggestions that the economy could be the Government's secret weapon over the next year. "We are going on the offensive on the economy," he said last night before a speech to the Scottish Labour Party conference, in which he will highlight job insecurity and a lack of investment as the two key problems facing the UK.

Labour intends to exploit the report that the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, is planning to scrap employment protection rights for 10 million workers.

But with Conservative MPs desperate for "yea-good" news to reflect their electoral prospects, Mr Clarke's move was welcomed on both the Tory and Labour benches. It is under heavy criticism for his stance on Europe, and on what remains of his party's Keynesian wing.

"Perfectly justified, though this may be the bottom of the cycle. The Bank of England has always gone for overkill on inflation — and always been wrong," said one moderate Tory MP. "Inflation is not a problem, he could go further," said a rightwinger, citing labour market flexibility as a key factor in avoiding wage-led pressures.

Mr Clarke is strongly in favour of postponing the election until the last minute, probably May 1 1997, if John Major's Commons majority holds up. Despite talk of "turning the tide", this week's Gallup poll showed why. Labour's lead, following the Scott Report affair, is up 8 points to 57.5 per cent, with the Tories on 23 per cent, and the Lib Dems on 18.

'Bumper year' spells poll gloom for Labour, page 9; Leader's comment, page 9; Money Guardian, page 21; Shares crash, page 22

Trafalgar Square pigeons for sale? It's no flight of fancy



A BIRD takes flight in the shadow of Nelson's column as the mystery of the pigeon thief of Trafalgar Square intensified yesterday, writes Angella Johnson.

The hunt is on for the man police say may have been selling thousands of pigeons stolen from under Nelson's watchful eye to unsuspecting restaurants. "It's not as fanciful as you think," said Phil Howard, head chef and owner of The Square in St James's. "A lot of chefs are looking for a bargain and will often buy things from poshers or people like that."

At £1 each there is not a lot of money in it, though he said: "The London bird would be succulent because they do nothing all day but pig out on seeds and left-over junk food. But I would be worried about the pollution and lead content."

Bernard Rayner, a third generation seed seller, reported the snatcher to police. "The last time I saw him was 10 days ago. He comes with a big box and spreads seeds on the ground, then scoops about 50 at a time and casually walks away."

He claims at least 1,000 birds have gone over the past few months, more than half the square's birds. "It is very serious. A great tourist attraction could be lost."

The snatcher, aged about 20, apparently laughed off police warnings and claimed to be collecting for a racing club in south London — which does not exist.

Leader comment, page 14 PHOTOGRAPH: SEAN SMITH

Legal row rages as Beale goes into hospital

Eleanor Carty

CAROLINE Beale, the British woman who tried to smuggle her dead baby on a flight from New York, last night spent her first night in intensive psychiatric care at Maudsley hospital, south London, after returning from the United States. But the transatlantic row over her treatment at the hands of the American legal system continued unabated.

Doctors at the Maudsley said she would remain an inpatient for at least two weeks, but they were optimistic that she would make a complete recovery from the psychosis that led her to kill her child.

Her parents, Peter and Daphne, from Chingford, Essex, will not be able to see her for the time being. Ms Beale, aged 32, was said to be exhausted but relieved finally to be home after striking a deal with the US prosecution authorities. In return for admitting the manslaughter of her baby, Olivia Ann, New York State Supreme Court Judge Robert Hanophy sentenced her to eight months' jail — which she had already served on remand in Riker's Island prison — five years' probation and psychiatric care in a British hospital for at least a year.

But the row over her treatment in the US resurfaced at a press conference at the Maudsley yesterday when her new psychiatrist advised against "crowding" over the British legal system.

During sentencing on Thursday, the American judge had criticised her father, Peter Beale, for calling the US justice system "barbaric and uncivilised". Judge Hanophy provoked strong reaction when in open court he called Britain's system, which allows a manslaughter charge in cases of infanticide, primitive.

Ms Beale's psychiatrist, Professor John Gunn, warned against complacency. "We in this country have nothing to be crowing about and shouting across the Atlantic about how things are and should be," the expert in forensic psychiatry said.

A country that forced jailed pregnant women to give birth in chains had "nothing to tell other countries about the treatment of prisoners". Ms Beale was arrested at John F Kennedy airport with the lifeless body of her daughter concealed under her sweater. After being allowed out on bail last May, Ms Beale spent a further 10 months with the possibility of a 15-year sentence hanging over her. Her New York defence attorney, Michael Dowd, said yesterday there was insufficient evidence to prove that the baby was born alive. He convinced her to "admit" manslaughter to ensure that she could return home.

Mr Dowd said he was ashamed of the American legal system. Professor Channi Kumar, who had prepared a psychiatric evaluation for her defence, said: "It is given priority, I think she has a very good chance of putting things together."

Her time in prison had left her with a condition analogous with post-traumatic stress disorder and she still had nightmares. "I visited Riker's myself and I had nightmares about it afterwards," Prof Kumar said.

Ms Beale will receive medication combined with psychotherapy when discharged from hospital. Prof Kumar said it was important that her baby — buried without her knowledge in New York — be returned to England. "That will allow her to grieve for the loss of her baby," he said.

Controversy erupts, page 2

'We are running the economy very well now. We have the most successful enterprise economy in Western Europe'

— Kenneth Clarke

on Wall Street last night. Share prices plunged on fears that US and UK interest rates were now at a trough.

Mr Clarke said the quarter-point reduction in base rates to 6 per cent was justified by easing inflationary pressures and the recent downturn in activity. "I think 1996 is going to be a very good year for the British economy, getting stronger as it goes on, and I keep being able to reduce interest rates because we have got public spending under control, borrowing under control and the inflationary pressures are going out of the economy."

Speaking on BBC radio, he added: "We are running the economy very well now. We have the most successful enterprise economy in western Europe at the moment."

The move prompted a spate of mortgage rate cuts led by Britain's biggest building society, the Halifax, which reduced its home loan rate by

Serbs kill under Nato's nose

Julian Borger in Grbavica, reports on a final spasm of ethnic cleansing

THE last few Muslims and Croats to have survived four years of war in Serb areas of Sarajevo are falling prey to a final spasm of ethnic cleansing under the nose of a 50,000-strong Nato-led force.

By the time Nato decides to use its troops to protect civilians it could be too late for scores of vulnerable people. It is already too late for Sadeta Mehanovic.

The Muslim schoolteacher, aged 65, had lived through 47 months of war. She had to hang on only a few more days before the suburb of Grbavica was handed to Bosnian federalist forces.

In her last days, aid workers say Mrs Mehanovic begged international humanitarian agencies for protection. They directed her to the United Nations police, who in turn could offer only to escort her to Bosnian Serb police.

It is the local police that Grbavica's non-Serbs fear most. They have taken the lead in ethnic cleansing, and are now suspected of looting and burning the district before they flee.

Nato troops are meant to patrol Grbavica but are a rare sight. At night the only sign of their presence is an occasional speeding armoured car.

So Mrs Mehanovic went back to her flat on Wednesday afternoon, and was shot dead the same night. Her neighbours heard intruders break down the door, then heard her screams but were too frightened to intervene.

Her door hung open yesterday with its bolt broken. Her body had been removed, but her blood and hair was splattered over the ceiling. Her empty wallet and spectacles lay on a sideboard. Her many books lay scattered about.

Aid workers in Grbavica say scores of elderly non-Serbs have received death threats and have barricaded themselves into their flats.

Even if the barricades prove strong enough to keep the thugs out, they may prove to be death-traps as the departing Serbs set fire to their buildings.

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BOB HOSKINS AS J. EDGAR HOOVER

"If there's anyone in this country knows more than Nixon it's J. Edgar Hoover"

— RICHARD NIXON

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MARCH 15

2 CHRONICLE/NEWS

Meningitis kills 3,000 children

Chris McGreal in Kano

AT LEAST 3,000 children have died in a meningitis epidemic in northern Nigeria...

Some doctors fear the real death toll is much higher - a suspicion compounded by the military government's health minister, Inechukwu Madubulke...

The international medical agency, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), the only aid agency working in Kano...

"This situation is really critical because the mass immunisation campaign has only just begun and only in the city..."

Some of those who have contracted meningitis have been reluctant to seek treatment because of the high cost of prescribed drugs.

Kano's Infectious Diseases

Hospital is treating about 100 new patients a day, despite its poor reputation. Until a few days ago it had just one doctor and the grounds were littered with spent needles and waste.

Spinal meningitis is highly contagious and is spread by any form of physical or respiratory contact, such as when an infected person sneezes on someone else.

The disease causes inflammation of the brain membranes and the spinal cord. It is characterised by a sudden onset of intense headaches, fever, vomiting and a stiff neck. It can cause coma or convulsions, and can be fatal if left untreated.

Doctors believe that the scale of the outbreak was compounded by an early start to the dry season - with its searing heat and winds carrying sand down from the Sahara, creating conditions in which meningitis thrives.



Caroline Beale arrives with her lawyer Michael Dowd at the Maudsley hospital in south London, where she is receiving psychiatric care

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID THOMAS

Legal row rages as Caroline Beale returns to UK

Ian Katz in New York

ROBERT HANOPLY, the judge at the centre of the Caroline Beale controversy, has recently presided over a string of headline-grabbing cases.

ing for the murder of more than a dozen women. "In case there is such a thing as reincarnation," he told Joel Rifkin, "I want you to spend your second life in prison."

Judge Hanopoly sits on the New York Supreme Court, the equivalent of a British crown court. Unlike most Supreme Court justices, he was not elected but appointed by the state governor.

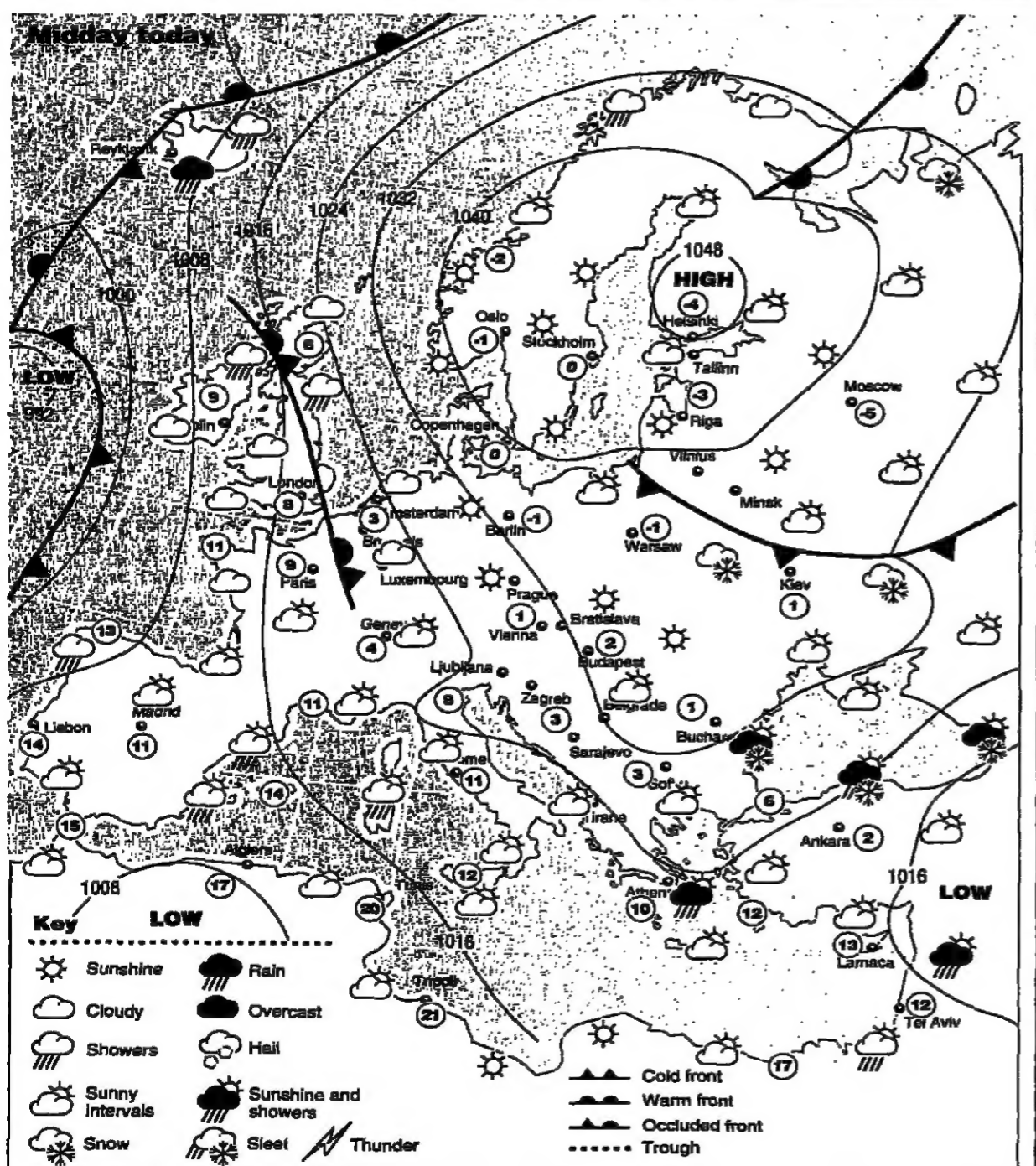
Judge Hanopoly's 36-year legal career appears to have been largely undramatic, however. He has served as an acting New York State Supreme Court Justice since 1987 and sits in Queen's, the largely residential New York borough where both the city's airports are located.

Judge launching a similar attack on a foreign legal system. "Judges are allowed to comment on issues affecting the administration of justice..."



Judge Robert Hanopoly

The weather in Europe



Forecast for the cities

Table with columns for city names and weather forecasts for today, tomorrow, and Monday. Cities include London, Paris, Rome, etc.

Around the world

Table showing weather forecasts for various global locations including London, New York, Tokyo, and Sydney.

European weather outlook

Scandinavia: An intense area of high pressure is centred over Finland. That means most places will remain dry today with plenty of sunshine, but it will be cold with severe frosts early and late. Max temp +3 to +6C.

Television and radio - Saturday

BBC 1: 8.55am News, 9.00am News, 9.30am News, 10.00am News, 10.30am News, 11.00am News, 11.30am News, 12.00pm News, 1.00pm News, 1.30pm News, 2.00pm News, 2.30pm News, 3.00pm News, 3.30pm News, 4.00pm News, 4.30pm News, 5.00pm News, 5.30pm News, 6.00pm News, 6.30pm News, 7.00pm News, 7.30pm News, 8.00pm News, 8.30pm News, 9.00pm News, 9.30pm News, 10.00pm News, 10.30pm News, 11.00pm News, 11.30pm News, 12.00am News.

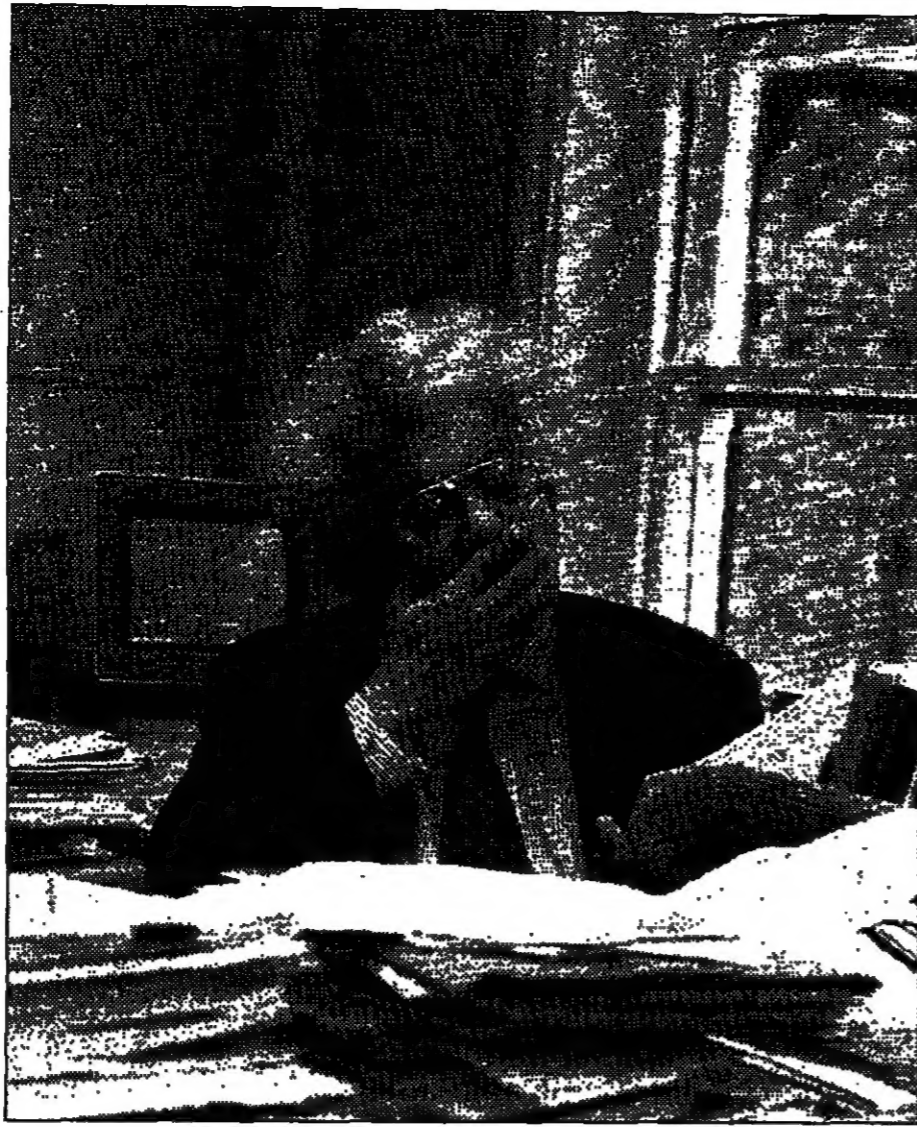
Television and radio - Sunday

BBC 1: 7.00am Match of the Day - The Road to Wembley, 8.30am News, 9.00am News, 9.30am News, 10.00am News, 10.30am News, 11.00am News, 11.30am News, 12.00pm News, 1.00pm News, 1.30pm News, 2.00pm News, 2.30pm News, 3.00pm News, 3.30pm News, 4.00pm News, 4.30pm News, 5.00pm News, 5.30pm News, 6.00pm News, 6.30pm News, 7.00pm News, 7.30pm News, 8.00pm News, 8.30pm News, 9.00pm News, 9.30pm News, 10.00pm News, 10.30pm News, 11.00pm News, 11.30pm News, 12.00am News.

Advertisement for Blenders, featuring a large image of a person's face and the brand name 'Blenders' in a stylized font.

'Come election time, the economy may not be the strong card that Labour thought it would be. Indeed, it may be the one thing that will help the Tories to claw back some of the lead in the opinion polls. It would be foolish to count on the economy helping Labour. The election is not won yet. There is a long way to go'

— Lord Desai (right) former Labour economy spokesman



Feeling good or feeling bad?

The Government and the Opposition have different views on the state of the economy, with both cases backed up by an array of statistics and league tables. Here are the views on the six main areas of the economic battleground.

	Conservative	Labour
Jobs	Unemployment down by more than 750,000 over the past 29 months. Treasury thinks it could fall below 1.5 million. Britain has lower unemployment rate than Germany, France or Italy.	At 2.2 million (8%) unemployment still more than double the level it was in 1979. A million fewer jobs since John Major became Prime Minister in November 1990.
Inflation	Lowest period of sustained inflation for 50 years. Annual inflation rate (ex mortgages) set to hit government target of 2.5 per cent or lower by end of Parliament.	Inflation has been suppressed not cured. Britain's inflation rate still the 11th highest in the European Union and sixth out of seven in the Group of Seven Industrial Nations.
Interest rates	Mortgage rates lowest for 30 years.	Decision to cut interest rates sign of economic weakness, not strength.
Investment	Overall investment has grown faster in Britain than in any other European country. Business investment (including service sector) up by one third since 1979.	Manufacturing investment still lower than it was in 1979 and has risen more slowly during present recovery than in any other post-recession period.
Growth	Britain has enjoyed the fastest recovery of any major European economy since the recession. Growth set for 3 per cent this year.	Government has presided over the two worst recessions since the war. Growth since 1979 has averaged 1.9 per cent a year - slowest period of post-war growth.
Living standards	Someone of average earnings (approx £18,000) will be £4,500 better off in 1996 than they were in 1979, after tax and inflation have been accounted for.	UK has fallen from 13th to 18th in the world prosperity league. A typical family is paying more than £500 more in taxes than it was in 1982, even after last November's tax cuts.

' Hamas charity' funds frozen

Richard Norton-Taylor and Ian Black

THE Charity Commissioners last night froze the assets of a London-based Palestinian fundraising organisation amid suspicions that its cash is being channelled to supporters of Hamas, the extremist group which has claimed responsibility for recent suicide bombs in Israel.

Bank accounts of the Palestinian Relief and Development Fund, known as Interpal, had been frozen "as a precautionary measure", a spokesman said last night. The commissioners expect to have urgent talks with the organisation early next week.

The move follows pressure from the Foreign Office and the Israeli government which this week urged European Union countries to tighten up on Palestinian fundraising agencies.

Interpal, which is believed to raise about £1 million annually, has been closely monitored by MI5 and Special Branch.

Yet last Thursday, Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, said there was no evidence of money raised in Britain being used for terrorism.

An Interpal spokesman told the Guardian last night it had not received any communication from the Charity Commission. "Interpal is purely charitable and humanitarian," he said. Projects included health schemes, care for the elderly and handicapped, and shipment of meat distributed under the supervision of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority.

Interpal, based in Cricklewood, north London, is part of a growing network of Arab or Muslim organisations which have given Britain a reputation as a centre for Islamist activity.

Interpal is said to have sent several missions to express solidarity with the Palestinians, including one which visited Hebron — a Hamas outpost — shortly after the massacre by an extremist Jewish settler in 1994.

'Bumper year' spells poll gloom for Labour

Most economists back Clarke's forecast of strong growth, low inflation and higher prosperity in 1996, reports Larry Elliott

THE Chancellor's claims that 1996 is set to be a "bumper year" for the economy were backed by economists yesterday, with most saying that interest rates and taxes boosting growth and consumer confidence.

Despite some anxiety that the Government is starting to play politics with the economy in the run-up to polling day, the consensus is that any inflation rise or deterioration in the trade balance will be delayed until after the election.

The shadow chancellor,

Gordon Brown, said yesterday that the quarter-point cut in base rates was a sign of economic weakness, not strength, and that a boost to consumer spending without an expansion in industrial capacity and improvement in skills will lead to familiar problems with inflation.

However, he sounded defensive when questioned about the likely return of the "feel good factor". And the Government's view that it is set fair to deliver strong growth, low inflation and higher prosperity over the coming year is

shared by at least one eminent opposition figure.

Lord Desai, who was a frontbench opposition spokesman in the Lords before being fired for making "unhelpful" comments about tax, has added to Labour's unease by saying his party may be well advised to avoid the economy as an election issue.

The Desai thesis is simple, and not dissimilar to that trotted out regularly by the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, and any other Cabinet minister stuck in front of a microphone on Radio 4's Today studio.

Over the past four years, inflation has been at its lowest sustained level for 50 years — and is set to fall again over the coming months. That gives Mr

Clarke all the ammunition he needs to win the argument over interest rates with the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George. Lower base rates mean lower mortgage rates, which in turn help to push up house prices and float the million-odd households in negative equity off the rocks of debt.

But that's not all. Consumer spending, which has been gently rising for some months, is about to be boosted by the economic equivalent of a dose of steroids. Households are receiving a £50 rebate off their electricity bills courtesy of the sell-off of the National Grid, building society mergers are leading to windfall pay-outs to savers and borrowers, and people who started saving in Tessas in

1991 have seen their tax-free investments mature. On top of that, the small tax cuts in the Budget come into effect in April, boosting consumption and helping to wipe out the memories of the huge tax increases in 1993 and 1994.

Lord Desai, in his article in the New Statesman last week, estimated that "all these dribs and drabs add up to a staggering £18 billion of cash into the economy". If only half this sum were spent rather than saved, that £9 billion injection of additional spending would be the equivalent of 6p off the basic rate of taxation.

Lord Desai, in his article in the New Statesman last week, estimated that "all these dribs and drabs add up to a staggering £18 billion of cash into the economy". If only half this sum were spent rather than saved, that £9 billion injection of additional spending would be the equivalent of 6p off the basic rate of taxation.

If the value of their house is also going up, Labour, which has spent the past four years ridding itself of all its "negatives" — the party of high taxation, devaluation, nationalisation — would be left with very little to say.

There are, of course, some important caveats to this analysis. First, the most recent evidence on the economy has not been especially good. Second, voters' memories may not be quite as short as the Government seems to be assuming. Political history suggests that administrations find it hard to recover from the sort of economic humiliation that occurred on Black Wednesday, even though ministers have been doing their best to re-write the history books since.

Third, there has been little sign so far that job insecurity — the prime cause of the "feelbad factor" — is being alleviated. Indeed, reports that the Government is planning to remove employment rights from workers in small businesses is hardly the way to improve matters.

But all that said, the Government thinks it now has the initiative.

Ministers believe the Opposition's offensive capability is limited on the economy and that voters will be swayed less by Labour's pledges of better training, welfare to work schemes and investment initiatives than by a pick-up in living standards.

Leader comment, page 14; Finance, page 22



RUTH LEA, head of Institute of Directors policy unit: "The economy is as flat as a pancake and the interest rate cut looks quite appropriate. Disposable incomes will be affected by tax cuts, Tessa's and the electricity rebate, and part of this will be spent. But there are still problems with the world economy. The US may pick up but Germany is flat on its back. Overall, we think things will pick up but it won't be that marvellous."



PROF TIM CONGDON, one of the Chancellor's wise men: "The next year will be pretty good. There will be a move towards above-trend growth (ie higher than 2.5 per cent) later this year and inflation will be moderate. By early 1997, I see good growth, unemployment at the lowest in Europe, house prices moving up and rising consumption. It will only be later that inflation will start to go up as a result of the economy overheating."



MARIAN BELL, economist with the Royal Bank of Scotland and one of the Guardian's panel of wise women: "The economy is picking up nicely. My view is that it is picking up rather too nicely, but inflation won't come back to haunt us until after the election. I don't think the consumer is going to be crying about inflation of 3 per cent. If he's in debt or had negative equity, he'll probably be quite pleased."



DAN CORRY, chief economist at left-leaning Institute for Public Policy Research: "I think Desai is massively overstating it. I don't think it's clear that everything is going fine. There will be a bounce back in the second half of 1996 but it will be due to consumption. Where is the investment? I also disagree that there will inevitably be a return of the feelgood factor, though consumer confidence will pick up from very low levels."

Big lenders cut mortgage rates

Margaret Hughes Personal Finance Editor

HOMEBUYERS will be celebrating cheaper mortgages this weekend as major lenders cut their home loan rates in line with the lowering of bank base rates. But there is still doubt whether the 0.25 per cent cut — the fourth in six months — will be enough to encourage first time buyers to get a foot on the housing ladder.

Britain's biggest lender, the Halifax Building Society, led the way — cutting its mortgage rate by 0.24 per cent to 7.35 per cent, effective immediately for new borrowers and from April for existing borrowers. This will reduce monthly payments for homebuyers with an average £50,000 repayment mortgage by just over £9, making their monthly outgoings almost £22 less than at the beginning of last year.

With the exception of the Nationwide, most other major lenders have also cut their mortgage rates. The Wool-

wich, Alliance & Leicester, Barclays Bank, National Westminster Bank and the TSB have all matched the Halifax's 7.35 per cent rate.

Abbey National has reduced its tiered rates by 0.25 per cent, producing new rates ranging from 7.29 per cent for borrowers with mortgages of less than £80,000 to 7.19 per cent for those with loans of more than £100,000.

The Nationwide, which had previously announced a cut in its mortgage rate to 6.99 per cent from April 1 as part of its new mutuality package, said yesterday it would

Mortgage comparisons			
Change in monthly payments			
Loan size	Jan 1995 (8.35%)	Latest	Monthly saving
Repayment	£30,000	£208.38	£3.83
	£50,000	£451.16	£8.50
	£100,000	£772.81	£14.76
Endowment	£30,000	£177.44	£5.10
	£50,000	£386.19	£11.10
	£100,000	£664.52	£19.10

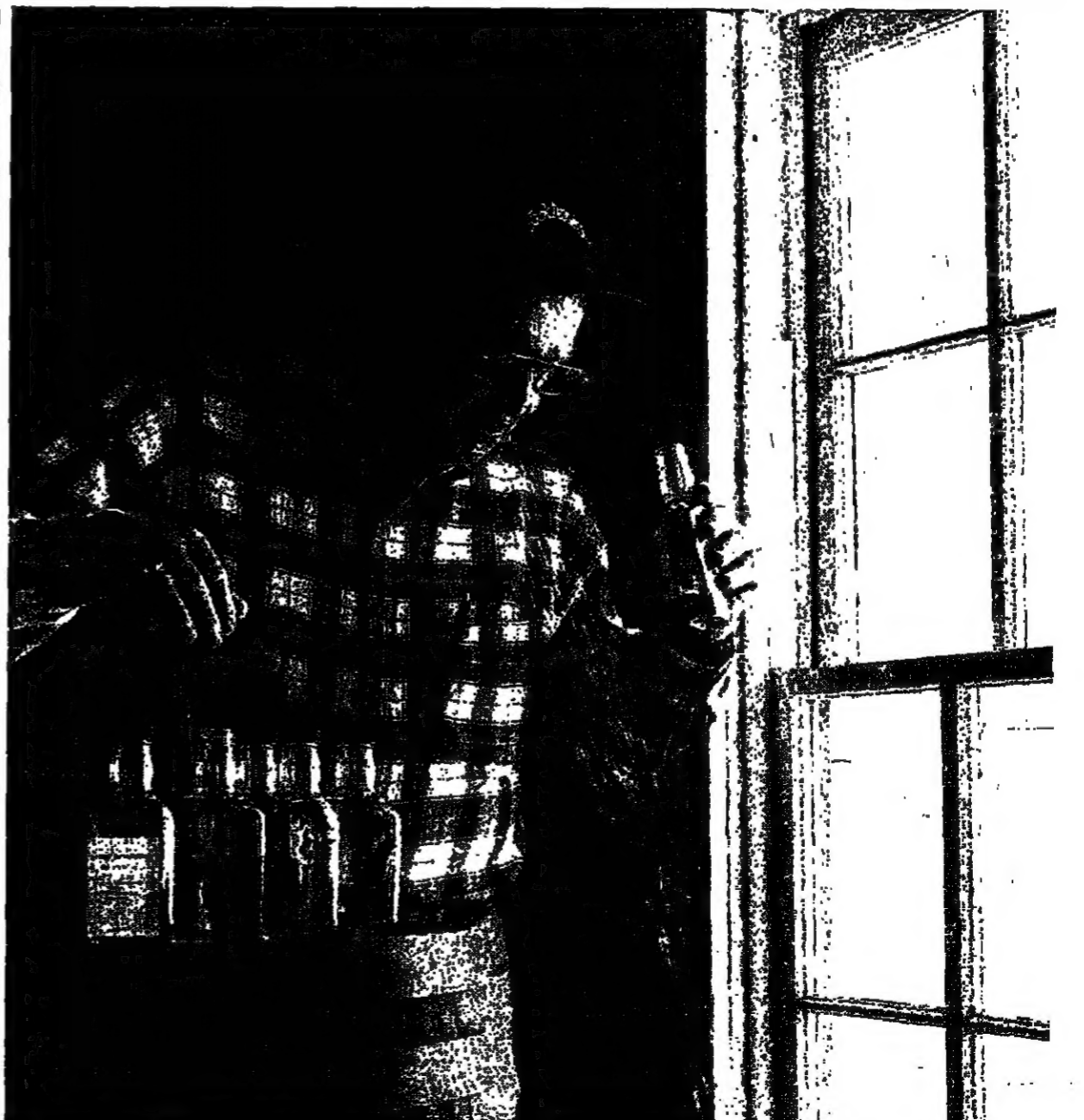
review its rates next week. Borrowers who have held a mortgage with the Britannia for at least five years will see their mortgage rate cut to 6.99 per cent from April 1.

Even before yesterday's bank base rate cut, mortgage rates were at their lowest level for 30 years, but the housing market has only shown signs of a pick up in the last few weeks. There is now cautious optimism that the housing market is finally turning the corner — the Halifax's house price index last week showed the first annual increase for more

than a year. However, the early months of the past two years have similarly shown signs of recovery which has not been sustained.

Garry Marsh, head of group corporate affairs at the Halifax, attributes these earlier reversals to tax increases which cut into pay packets at the beginning of each financial year. He is more optimistic that this year's upturn will be sustained as the tax cuts announced in November's Budget start to boost consumer spending power early next month.

However, given the more than 3,500 job losses announced in the last two weeks alone, the long-awaited return of the "feelgood" factor remains as elusive as ever. Ian Harley, finance director of the Abbey National, said: "The real problem in the housing market is a lack of 'feelgood' or rather 'feel secure' factor. We doubt there will be any sharp recovery in house prices without a change of government, leading to a change of mood on the part of consumers."



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As a taster for Jack Daniel Distillery, he'll sample a lot of whiskey in a day. But Bill never swallows a drop. He'll roll the whiskey around in his mouth, tasting it for smoothness and maturity. And when he retires it to a spittoon, there's no sense of impropriety. Around here, everyone knows if we didn't have people spending their days spittin', we wouldn't have a whiskey so highly valued for sippin'.



JACK DANIEL'S TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Ah, the western planners would say, but think of the squalor, the confusion, the jam-packed traffic of cars, buses, bicycles, donkeys, herds of goats — street vendors, impertinent arches, jolly smiling women, wandering mendicants — the rubbish, the crumbling walls, the piles of onions by the Bab Futuh! Jan Morris in Cairo

Outlook page 19

4 BRITAIN

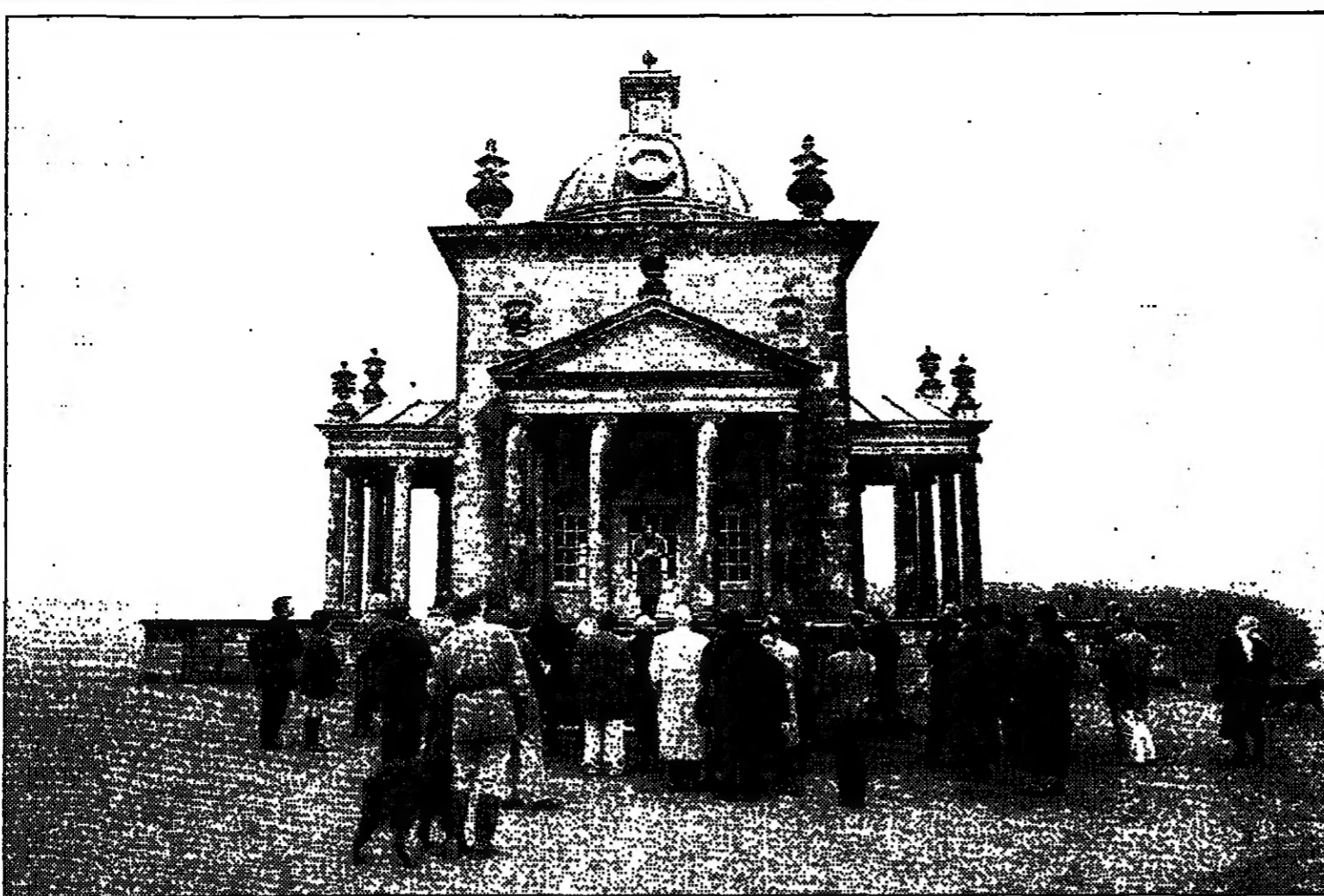
Castle Howard host to a windy debate

Martin Wainwright ponders a question

A SMALL crowd gathered on a freezing North Yorkshire hill-top yesterday to hear four philosophers attempt to answer the question: What is Question?

Each academic took up a symbolic position at a doorway of the grand Temple of the Four Winds, Castle Howard, as the mansion's squire and his red setters looked on benignly. "They'll feel it when they go round the North Wind corner," said Simon Howard, summoning the dogs to hear William Charton of Edinburgh University in full flow.

"We have plenty of odd events at Castle Howard, but this must be one of the most peculiar," said the squire. The stylised dispute was organised by the Henry Moore Foundation, and the gnomic question was posed by the American artist and philosopher James Lee Byars, whose "King golden globe, Monument to



Philosophy buffs gathered at the Temple of the Four Winds, Castle Howard, North Yorkshire, yesterday, to hear four philosophers engage in a debate

Language, is on show at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds.

"A little louder please, Sean," the institute's director Robert Hopper had told the globe yesterday morning, getting a muffled reply from inside.

Assistant curator Sean Pickard spent the day curled up inside the three-metre sphere, reciting extracts from W.B. Yeats to

visitors admitted three at a time.

Then the coach to Castle Howard was at the door and the lessons of the globe — "a gap opening onto a limitless world," according to the French philosopher Jean-Michel Ribettes (representing the East Wind) — were transferred to the Yorkshire countryside.

Mr Ribettes, in the cold-est of all Vanbrugh's four

porches, alarmed the more wilting members of the crowd by fishing out at least four closely typed pages of argument.

His answer to the question was a psalm of praise for Byars, an artist whose sense of humour was fortunately shared by his parents.

This first exhibition, at age 83, consisted of "large stone spheres in a vigor-

ously empty space in his parents' home in Detroit, with all the windows, doors and furniture removed from the house."

The Howard setters promptly started to behave fretfully, pleading for another run, and the four philosophers set off at a brisk pace back to the mansion for a post-debate tea.

"I'm not sure they know where it is; they're going

the wrong way," said Mr Howard, with gentlemanly concern.

"Don't worry," said Mr Hopper, as the quartet vanished over Vanbrugh's and Hawksmoor's carefully planned horizon. "They'll just argue their way there linguistically. The rest of us can carry on pondering the question and thinking about a thoroughly memorable day."

Court backs Dorrell on drug ban

Clare Dyer Legal Correspondent

A HIGH Court judge yesterday upheld the Government's decision to stop doctors prescribing the pain-killing capsule form of the sleeping drug Temazepam on the NHS, in the wake of "devastating" injuries to drug abusers who melted down and injected the contents.

RP Sherer Ltd, sole manufacturer of the capsule in the UK, had challenged the decision of Stephen Dorrell, the Health Secretary, to add it to the list of drugs which doctors are prohibited from prescribing on the NHS.

The company, which stands to lose £2 million a year, had argued the list's purpose was to oblige GPs to prescribe cheaper, generic forms of drugs, and Mr Dorrell had no power to include Temazepam just because a small number of addicts abused it. But Mr Justice Judge said the ban, which came into force in January, was a "permissible exercise" of the Health Secretary's powers to protect public health. Drug takers had melted down and injected the contents of the capsules with devastating consequences, including amputation of limbs and death.

The ban, which does not cover private prescriptions, had been agreed after the Department of Health conducted full and fair inquiries, and a formidable body of informa-

tion had been gathered in consultations with clinicians and experts on drug abuse, said the judge.

Scherer had warned if the tablet or elixir forms of the drug would be abused instead. But the judge said government medical investigators had concluded addicts would not resort to the tablets or elixir because they did not provide the same euphoric "hit".

If they were abused, the Health Secretary might have to make an addition to the list of NHS prohibited drugs.

Michael Beloff, QC, for Scherer, had argued that Mr Dorrell had made a novel and "ad hoc" use of the list. The Health Department had conceded the list's original purpose was to contain costs and that there was no precedent for placing a drug on it on public health and safety grounds.

Mr Beloff said when the list was used on an ad hoc basis there were no statutory safeguards for pharmaceutical companies like Scherer, which faced "grievous losses" if products were banned.

The judge said Mr Dorrell had been entitled to use his powers of prohibition on the grounds of public health and safety. He also rejected accusations the ban contravened European law and was procedurally unfair.

He gave Scherer leave to appeal against his ruling on the ground that it raised a matter of public importance.

Heseltine tells deficit city not to expect help

MICHAEL Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, last night made it clear that Liverpool could not expect the Government to bail it out of its latest financial crisis.

The city council's problems showed that the Labour Party had not changed since he visited Liverpool in the Militant-dominated days of the early 1980s.

The city council, with Britain's biggest council tax, faces the prospect of cutting up to 1,000 jobs tomorrow in an effort to bridge a £44 million budget deficit before the midnight deadline. But Mr Heseltine insisted during a visit to the city last night: "Liverpool has to live within the same constraints as everyone else."

Its problems were not all down to the Government, as both unions and councillors in the city had been claiming. "A large number of people in Liverpool are now playing their part but it is the bad examples that get the headlines. It was exactly the same when I first came here in the early 1980s."

"My message to the council is: you've shown that you can win in competition to bring jobs to this city and improvements to this city — but only if the economic climate is right. That means you have to have the same constraints as any government would insist on."

Tony Blair, the Labour

leader, would also insist on tight financial management. Mr Heseltine said: "There is no escape from that, nobody can buck the system."

The formula used to decide how central government distributed money were fair, he said. "This city has probably gained as much as any city in the UK from the help this Conservative government has brought here."

He added: "A lot of other councils with similar sorts of problems manage extremely well. One is forced to the conclusion that there must be something particular about Liverpool that causes the trouble."

Mr Heseltine said he had worked closely with Labour council leader Harry Rimmer. "He has shown in many cases great courage in trying to bring sanity to this local authority, but has seen the sort of problems he is up against with the Labour Party."

Up to 6,000 local government jobs will be lost in the next financial year as county and metropolitan councils struggle to accommodate budget shortfalls of £500 million, the Local Government Chronicle said yesterday.

The magazine said at least 5,300 jobs would go across the board, and the figure could rise above 5,000 if Liverpool went ahead with proposed cuts. Birmingham city council would be the hardest hit, with 727 jobs estimated to go.

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'The treetop phase ends with a man giving a farewell rendition of Amazing Grace on his Spanish bagpipes, while a backing group of six bulldozers churned the earth around him'

Gary Younge on the battle of Newbury



Felling has been completed on 77 of the 382 acres needed for the Newbury bypass, and 47 acres have been completely cleared PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEAVER

Road protesters brought down to earth

BY midday yesterday all but a couple of the treetop protesters at the Snelmore site in Newbury had been brought down to earth with a bang — some with the help of the ballistics.

One man was allowed to play a farewell rendition of Amazing Grace on his Spanish bagpipes while a backing group comprising six bulldozers churned the earth around him.

How many more surreal sights the Battle of Newbury will offer depends on whose foot soldiers you are prepared to believe. In bald figures, the bulldozers need to clear 382.45 acres, according to the Newbury Weekly News, which publishes a regular update on progress. Of that, tree felling has been completed on 77.58 acres (20.3 per cent) and 47.9 acres (13.1 per cent) have been completely cleared and are now ready for building.

"They've clearly made a start but the whole conflict is far from over," said a reporter on the newspaper. A spokeswoman for the Highways Agency, which is responsible for building the bypass, divides the initial building contract into two stages which provides slightly more cheerful statistics for the builders. Stage one involves felling trees and shrubs and is about half completed. Stage two demands the clearing of all timber in preparation for building and is only a third of that finished she says.

But the builders are already two thirds of the way through their contract, which means that whoever's statistics one takes, the protesters have already indicated a considerable dent in the original timetable. "Of course the protesters have made a difference but

the road is to be built over 2 1/2 years so a month here or there can be made up later," she said.

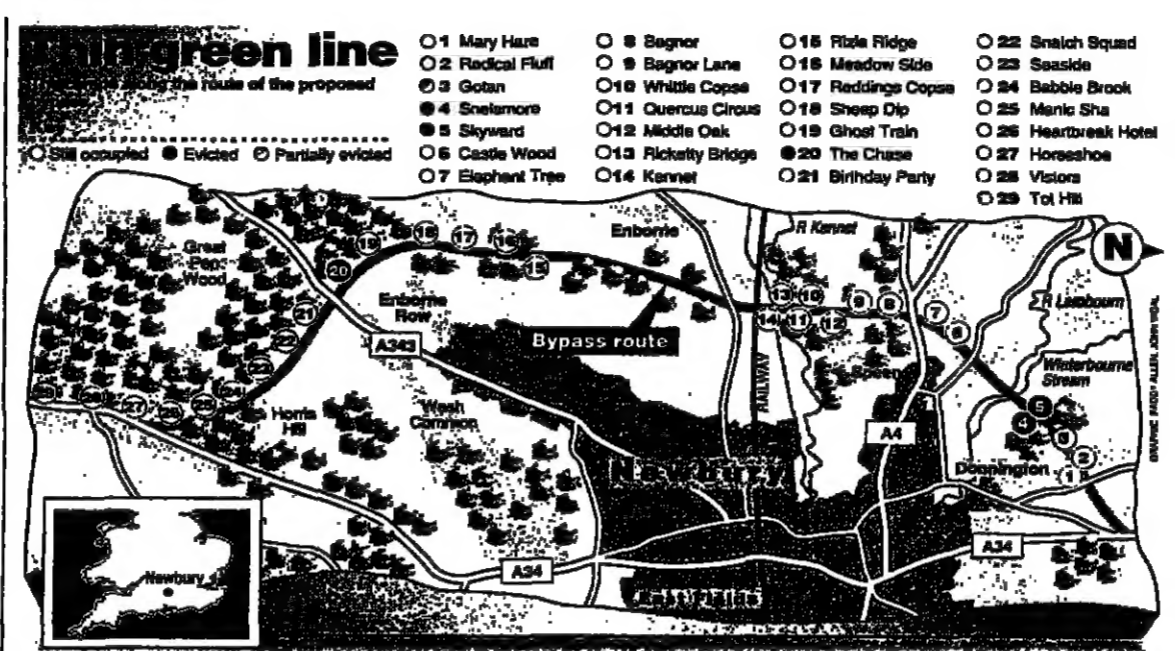
The agency is however racing against the environment's clock, around the end of the month the nesting season begins and they will need official permission to chop down some trees.

The protesters are well aware of this and are hoping that if they can hold up tree felling long enough, nature will take its course and disrupt the timetable even further. It is doubtful, however, that the season will have anything but a minimal effect on construction work.

Unlike the agency, the environmentalists talk in phases rather than stages. They say they are currently embroiled in the second phase of their campaign, in which they are opposing evictions by camping in the trees. They say they are not even half way through phase two yet with more than 20 tree camps still to be removed. Behind them is phase one which was the initial occupation of site and ahead lies phase three — the "ground defence". A spokesman said the principal battles in the next phase would take place around Tot Hill and Penn Wood which he promised would be defended tenaciously.

"This is just the beginning. We will defend the very last tree and then every last patch of ground. People would not have got involved with us must dedication if they didn't think we could stop the road being built."

The Highways Agency yesterday claimed that only one specialist climber, not three, had defected to the protesters. Paul Luton, who was said to have defected on Thursday, yesterday confirmed he was still working for the ballistics.



First man of the woods moved on in search of peace as protest grew

BADGER, a former woodworker and now a man of the woods, set up the first Newbury protest camp, writes John Vidal. He bent his hazel branches, covered them with plastic and lived alone in the Snelmore oak woods from August 1994. Within a year he had been joined by so many people that he moved "down the road" to set up Granny Ash camp in search of peace and quiet. By late summer 1995, six large camps had been established — at Snelmore, Granny Ash, Bagnor, Kennet, Reddings Copse and The Chase and Tot Hill. Most were ground camps

crude, but efficient "benders" which are watertight and quick to erect. Some benders had mod cons like pallet floors, others were little more sophisticated than the refuse "bins" found in disaster areas. All camps revolve around a fire and cooking/living tent. The mushrooming of tree houses began in mid-January after the bypass work started in one of the coldest winters on record. A national "phone tree" attracted more than 200 people to Newbury. Many were skilled woodcraftsmen from previous road and open cast coalmine projects in Lancashire, Wales, and the West Country.

Within weeks there were dozens of new camps, often only a few hundred yards apart. The strongest is The Isle of Kennet Free Independent State where protesters have made an island by linking the River Kennet with Kennet and Avon canal. The "mother ship" tree house, which is stretched between more than six trees, can sleep 12 people. There are 10 other fortified houses, all linked by aerial ropewalks. The hardest tree to clear will be the 150ft Corsican Pine at Reddings Copse, which may need a helicopter to remove people locked onto a ladder which rises 15ft over its top.

As the big camps are cleared, newer ones like Ricketty Bridge — also on an island — are growing, and every available tree is being squatted in the camps that are left. In the past few weeks, Radical Fruit, Rista Ridge, Ghost Train, Manic Sha and Quercus Circus camps have been set up. There are thought to be 22 but some are little more than a tree or two. Others are growing rapidly. Local people have been helping the protesters fortify their camps at weekends.

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Strike hits Kew in show of discontented flower power

Owen Bowcott on the pay dispute leading to gardens' first stoppage in 200 years

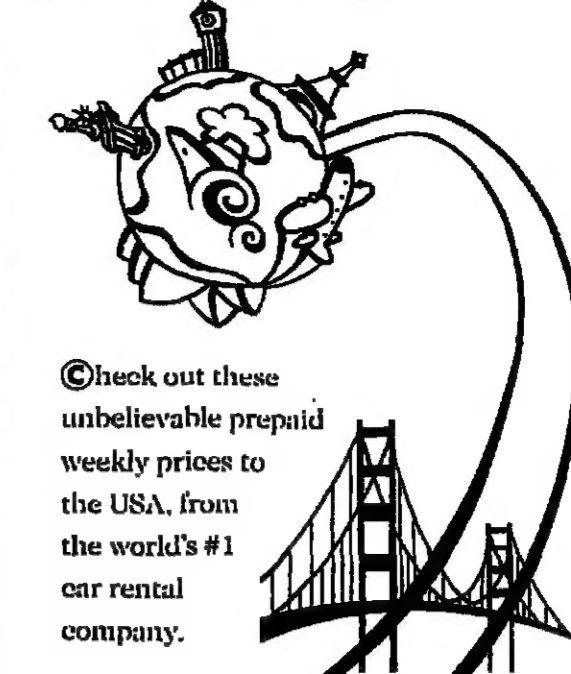
BOTANIC horticulturists at Kew Gardens yesterday walked out of their tropical hot-houses to stage their first strike, in protest at a pay offer amounting to £65 a year. Where the demoted George III once talked to the trees, the staff of the Royal Botanic Gardens claim they are being driven to distraction by a royal garden since the 18th century. Kew was a refuge for George III during his periodic bouts of madness. Paul Maloney, a GMB regional official, said: "This is the first time in more than 200 years of history that there has been industrial action taken by staff. They are extremely low paid. These people are not mowing the lawns. They are all highly qualified botanic horticulturists. The dispute centres on a performance-related pay offer last July, which Kew's management claims averaged 6.5 per cent. Everyone was promised a 0.9 per cent increase for inflation, but some staff received no performance-related element and their annual increase amounted to around 5.5 per cent. The GMB, which claims 82 out of 125 horticulture staff at the gardens, has threatened further industrial action if

there are no fresh talks. John Lavin, operations manager at Kew, yesterday insisted the performance-related pay scheme had been agreed with the unions three years ago. "Horticultural pay in the country as a whole is pretty low," he conceded. "For that reason we moved staff off civil service grades which formerly equated them with industrial workers or ordinary gardeners. Only a very few people have not received performance-related pay. Kew is run by a board of trustees, but its main subsidy of £15.5 million this year comes from the the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Treasury cuts had not been severe, Mr Lavin said. "We like to be first in a lot of things, but this is our first strike — it's regrettable and disappointing. Among recent achievements was the production of the world's largest water lily which reached a diameter of 8ft 7in. Such successes are not reflected in their performance-related pay packets, argues Dave Barnes, a GMB shop steward. "We are not asking for much, just a reasonable wage."

Even at university the dividing line between the Smooth and Hairy political tribes is apparent. Labour Clubs at Oxbridge — or anywhere else — are packed with scruffies who dress and talk like, well, like students. Their Tory counterparts look like embryo MPs. Michael White

Outlook page 15

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6 WORLD NEWS

Middle East peace dominates ministers' meeting

EU seeks to calm relations with US

John Palmer in Brussels
EUROPEAN Union foreign ministers meet in Palermo today hoping to heal a widening rift with the United States over proposed new US sanctions against Cuba and the threatened Middle East peace process.

ing list of foreign trade disputes - including the European ban on beef hormones - which already divide the EU and the US. The informal meeting of foreign ministers called by Italy (which holds the rotating EU presidency) will be dominated by the threat to the Middle East peace process. The EU is anxious to hammer out an agreed line before the hastily convened international summit in Egypt next Wednesday to discuss how to combat global terrorism.

they want the US to allow the EU a more active and more equal role in the search for peace in the region. EU governments are pressing Israel to show restraint after the recent spate of bombings. They believe an indiscriminate and heavy handed Israeli response to Hamas-inspired terrorism might backfire by weakening the Palestinian authorities and pushing the more moderate Hamas political factions back into the arms of the terrorists.



Battleground... Civilians pass a Russian military checkpoint after fierce fighting in the Chechen capital Grozny

PHOTOGRAPH: GREGORY TAMBUROV

Elderly Germans fight for 'death strip' land rights

Speculators could make a killing just east of the Berlin wall. Ian Traynor reports

SWEPT by the vagaries of war and cold war from east Prussia (now Russian), to Silesia (now Polish), Berlin and then Vienna, Charlotte Hildebrandt is now back in Berlin fighting what is likely to be her last battle. Supported by two walk-in investors she stands, a widow of 87, on wasteland in the centre of the German capital and surveys the rubble-strewn ground.

want them back. But the government in Bonn has given the strip up for sale, denying them the property expropriated by the communists. It introduced a bill giving them the right to buy back the land at a quarter of its current value. Last week the upper house torpedoed the bill and the claims have now gone to a mediation committee.

along the wall was classified as state property. "Wall property" was exempted from 1990 legislation which provided for the restitution of land expropriated by East Germany. According to Dieter Blumenwitz, a professor of international law at Würzburg University, the land never legally belonged to East Germany. For Bonn to claim that it did was tantamount to denying the four powers' jurisdiction over cold-war Berlin, a foundation of the post-war order.

Chechens exploit Moscow's disarray

James Meek in Moscow

THE strength, discipline and motivation of the Chechen armed force which occupied large areas of Grozny this week might have been expected to force the Kremlin finally to accept that it is at war with a determined nationalist group, not a small band of crazed bandits. In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, the Russian leadership refuses to accept that the rebels are a military force to be reckoned with, a force with clear political goals supported by many Chechen people.

Gunfire echoes round city centre

GUNFIRE intensified last night in Grozny where Russian troops mounted "search and destroy" missions against rebel fighters who attacked and occupied parts of the city. As darkness fell, the sky glowed orange with what local people said was a fire at an oil dump south of the city. Sniper and automatic gunfire and powerful blasts echoed across the city centre, 500 yards from the Moscow-backed government's headquarters. - Reuter.

Most of the territory is not in any sense occupied by Russian forces; federal troops huddle in isolated lowland dugouts longing to go home. Increasingly, the job of protecting government buildings and vital installations, like the pipeline which will carry oil from the Caspian oilfields, is being handed over to Chechen paramilitary units. They are supposedly loyal to Moscow but susceptible to personal and cultural pressure from within the community. These local loyalists bore the brunt of the first wave of rebel attacks on Grozny this

week. Officials denied persistent rumours that some had gone over to the rebel side. Federal forces have reacted with casual, apparently haphazard brutality against communities where the rebel presence is considered particularly brazen. There was the massacre at Samashki early in the war which took many civilian lives; last month's attack on Novogrozny which destroyed 40 per cent of the town; and the continuing threat to civilians in Serpovodsk. Russian artillery and aircraft have launched countless inaccurate strikes at villages in Chechnya and Ingushetia, achieving little except to terrify civilians and make them hate Russia. The rebels have always managed to slip away and regroup. Time and again they have proved they can launch major attacks on lowland communities - in Gudermes, Argun, Budonovsk, Kizlyar and now Grozny itself. Rebels in the president's administration appear to be

pinning their hopes on the Moscow-installed loyalist Chechen administration of Doku Zavgayev and his cronies, who strike deals with lowland village elders for peace in exchange for federal funds and autonomy, so as to create a security zone north of the mountains. With surprising candour, the former security service chief, Sergei Stepanin, admitted to the weekly Obshaya Gazeta that the government did not expect a quick resolution of the conflict. "The president and the prime minister understand perfectly well that we have to get out of the situation we are in. But this can't be done in a month, or two, or even five. The thing is that in the run-up to elections we need to calm the situation down somewhat," he said. Until the Kremlin acknowledges the military strength of the separatists and the hostility to Russia among the Chechen people as a whole, the rebels will continue to set the country's pre-election agenda.

World news in brief

Hijackers seize Turkish Cypriot airliner

A HIJACKED Turkish Cypriot airliner with more than 100 people on board landed last night in the Bulgarian capital Sofia, the hijackers' chosen destination, writes Chris Nuttall in Ankara. Security forces were sent to the airport and the Turkish ambassador was called in.

The hijackers' identity was not known. A spokesman for the airline, Umik Utku, told Turkish television that the Boeing 737 was seized an hour after it took off from Ercan airport in northern Cyprus en route for Istanbul. The passengers included Russians, Bulgarians, Iranian,

ans, Turks and tourists from the United States, Japan, Belgium, France and Denmark. The Turkish Cypriot news agency, T.K.A., said there were 102 passengers and nine crew. Turkey occupied the northern half of the island in 1974. The Turkish Cypriots declared an independent state in 1981.

Chile protests to Britain

Chile has protested to Britain about the arrest of a Chilean trawler fishing near the Georgia Islands, the foreign ministry said yesterday. A British patrol ship captured the Antonio Lorenzo on suspicion of fishing illegally in waters off South Georgia, a British territory 800 miles south-east of the Falkland Islands. - Reuter.

Arrest warrant

The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal issued an international arrest warrant yesterday against the Croatian Serb leader, Milica Martić, for allegedly ordering terrorist attacks on central Zagreb with cluster bombs last May. The warrant is being sent to the Nato-led peace implementation force (I-For) in Bosnia. - AP.

Extradition move

Switzerland is likely to hand over to the UN war crimes tribunal Alfred Musema-Urwana, a former Rwandan tea factory director accused of involvement in the massacre of thousands of Tutsis. - AP.

Liberia clashes

Heavy fighting broke out in Kakata, central Liberia, trapping 11 United Nations military observers, a UN official said. - Reuter.

Hamas man held

Palestinian police, under Israeli pressure to crack down on Islamic militants, have detained Mahmoud al-Zahar, a leader of the Hamas movement, his family said yesterday. - Reuter.

Amnesty request

An apartheid era assassin, Dirk Coetzee, said yesterday he had applied to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Cape Town for amnesty for 27 crimes, including six murders. - Reuter.

Stalinists jailed

A Warsaw court yesterday jailed 12 Stalin-era political policemen, convicting them of beatings and torture after an unprecedented 38-month trial. They were investigation officers of the ministry of public security involved in crushing opposition to the communist takeover after the second world war. - Reuter.

Haiti's police revive fears

POLICE in Haiti, hunting for gangsters who nearly killed a fellow officer, went on the rampage in the capital Port au Prince, bursting into shacks and shooting on sight, witnesses said. At least 11 people were killed, most shot at point-blank range. The terror that reigned under the now-defunct military has been revived by street gangs in Haiti's slums. It was compounded by Wednesday's actions of a police force already criticised for being trigger-happy. The shootings highlighted fears about the future of the country's fragile democracy soon to be entrusted to an ill-equipped police force which, despite foreign training, has repeatedly displayed repressive habits. "Police come looking for young men. They burst into your house. They say the ones they find are members of the Red Army gang and kill them," said Michelle Jean, a mother of eight whose eldest son has gone into hiding. She said she is more afraid of the new police now than the gangs. UN peacekeepers, who have been helping the police for a year, were supposed to withdraw on February 27, but will stay until June, with a force scaled down from 6,200 to 1,500. - AP.

Amnesty's woman of conscience



AMNESTY International's prisoner of conscience for International Women's Day yesterday is Kethoun Ahmed Laïdi Ouanat (left), a 24-year-old from the Western Sahara, who has been held in a Moroccan military prison since October 1992, writes Victoria Brittain. After 10 months of beatings, torture and sexual abuse, she was jailed for 20 years after a trial in camera for threatening the state's external security. She rejected her statement admitting the charges, saying she had signed it under torture. No other evidence was brought against her. Kethoun is believed to be a supporter of the Polisario Front, which is fighting for the independence of the Western Sahara.

Ankara and Baghdad sign deal to reopen oil pipeline

TURKEY and Iraq signed an agreement yesterday to reopen an oil pipeline closed by United Nations sanctions since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, writes Chris Nuttall in Ankara. At a ceremony in Ankara, the Turkish energy minister, Husnu Dogan, said: "If Iraq agrees with the UN plan allowing it to export \$2 billion worth of oil for humanitarian purposes, the pipeline will be ready to be activated at once, and oil will be pumped into our Yamurtalik terminal within a couple of days." Talks on the proposal are due to resume in New York on Monday. The Iraqi oil minister, Amir Muhammed Rasheed, said Baghdad was very hopeful about the negotiations. "We want to transport all of

the exported oil through Turkey," he said. He has been in Turkey all week and officials here hope his visit will mark the renewal of trade relations between the two countries. They arranged his safe passage, with a technical team, through Kurdish-held northern Iraq. Both sides pronounced the pipeline in good shape after more than five years of disuse. It links the Kirkuk field to the Yamurtalik terminal on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. Turkey estimates it has lost \$2 billion in pipeline fees because of the sanctions. Ministers have suggested they will buy the Iraqi oil and sell Baghdad the food and medicine it requires in exchange. Twelve million gallons of crude are lying dormant in the pipeline.

VACANCY. MUST SPEAK FLUENT LATIN. QUOMODO COGIS COMAS TUAS SIC VIDERI? When the monks who lived at Bury St. Edmunds abbey in the 13th century were allowed to speak (which wasn't very often), Latin was the holy order of the day. Indeed, for a young novice entering the monastery, it was a sine qua non. Fortunately, he would have found it far easier to get his tongue round the eight pints of the Abbot's Ale he was allowed in the evening. The ale was brewed in the monastery with natural spring water drawn from its own well. Today we're still drawing water from the same source for our own Abbot Ale. And while most other beers are fermented for just three or four days, Abbot is fermented slowly for a full seven ('Blessed by the Sabbath') to give it a rich, deep flavour. Many have declared it to be one of the finest real ales around. And even, on occasions, the ne plus ultra. ABBOT ALE FROM GREENE KING

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Iran and Iraq: America sees a two-headed monster, the region knows they are the power players. IAN BLACK reports

Giant of the Gulf calls the shots

While Iran flexes its military muscle, its neighbours look politely away, anxious to keep on good terms



Iran's Hashemi Rafsanjani: Building up strength

BRITISH frigates on routine patrol just south of the Straits of Hormuz on January 6 spotted an Iranian naval vessel test-firing an anti-ship missile that had never been seen before in or near the Gulf.

Analysis concluded that the new weapon was the low-flying Chinese C802, comparable to the Exocet used by Western navies — a worrying presence in the strategic sea lanes used to export one third of the world's oil.

This lucky piece of intelligence-gathering by one of the two warships in the Royal Navy's "Armilla Patrol" was an important addition to appreciations of Iranian capabilities.

But knowing what Iran can do and what it intends to do are different matters. And it is a significant distinction in a week when the US has again demanded tougher international action against it, this time over alleged support for Palestinian suicide bombers.

Under Washington's "dual containment" policy, Iran's actions "constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy and economy of the United States".

That was how President Bill Clinton put it a year ago when he banned all US trade with the Islamic Republic and sought the support of reluctant allies — then, as now — in Europe and Japan.

But viewed from the Gulf littoral facing Iran, things look more nuanced and less threatening.

Iran has a population of 63 million (Saudi Arabia has 13 million, Iraq 18 million), is more powerful than any of its Arab neighbours.

In the past year, say US sources, it has fortified positions on the disputed island of Abu Musa and tripled its surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missile strength.

Its navy has two Russian-made Kilo-class submarines, ideal for the shallow waters around Hormuz, and a third is on the way. It also has five Chinese Houdeong fast-attack patrol boats, with more on order. Exercises, including amphibious landings, are becoming more sophisticated.

And more ominously it is said by Washington, and particularly by the Israelis, to be pursuing a nuclear capability. Last summer Iran used a helicopter to spray an aerosol on its own ships, indicating a capacity for chemical warfare.

"It's slow, it's in its infancy but it's a big infant that can bloody somebody's nose," says a Western military source. "If they continue on this track, it won't be very many years before they become much more of a threat."

Yet Gulf Arabs worry about Iran less than they used to. Two years ago, when Kuwait was bankrolling Saddam Hussein's war against the Ayatollah Khomeini, Shi'ite terrorists tried to kill the emir and bombed the American and French embassies.

In 1981, in the first flush of the revolution, Iran played a role in an abortive uprising against Bahrain's ruling Al Khalifa family. The island state still has problems.

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Elsewhere in the Gulf only the United Arab Emirates has a dispute with Iran — over the islands of Abu Musa and the Tunbs. Dubai is a vital trading centre for Iran. Links with Oman are good. Maverick Qatar also enjoys reasonable relations with Tehran, mainly because it fears Iran could make trouble for the huge North Dome gas field.

Even Saudi Arabia, Iran's principal rival across the Gulf, seems to want relations with Iran on an even keel and, despite fears about resurgent Shi'ites in its eastern provinces, is wary of driving Tehran into a corner.

Everywhere there is a sense of accommodation rather than confrontation, of wary acceptance by the Arabs of the regional power that wants to establish its hegemony, dabbles in propaganda and intimidation, but otherwise behaves correctly.

In Britain, the Foreign Office worries about the dogmatic thrust of US policy on Iran, and stresses that problems are potential rather than actual. But it is, as so often, the junior partner.

Fear of Tehran is based largely on uncertainty about who is calling the shots. Pragmatists like Ali Akbar Velayati, the foreign minister, have been wooing the Gulf. If radicals gain the upper hand, it might be a different matter.

Yet whoever is in charge will have to make practical calculations that are likely to outweigh ideology. It needs to export its oil, obtain credit, and send its pilgrims on the hajj to Mecca. It also wants to keep Iraq weak. And the US is doing just that.

Arab governments are happy with the Iraq side of dual containment but privately more sceptical about US policy on Iran. "Iran can't do here what happened in its own country when the shah was overthrown," insists Abdel-Reda al-Asiri, of Kuwait University.

"The Soviet Union during the cold war, Iran seeks opportunities to exploit and, while it may have found them in both Lebanon and Palestine, in the Gulf they seem rare. Criticising the huge role of the US military could be another one."

Behind the perimeter walls of the United Arab Emirates: from the corner of 9th Street and 1st Avenue, handy for the beauty parlour or the Patisserie, you can see Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, water bowlers and jeeps, all lined up and ready to go to war.

"It's not home, but it's OK," says Richard Hill, a civilian administrator on the Kuwaiti military presence the Gulf has ever seen.

If Saddam threatens the emirate again, it is from here that the first American units will deploy. The equipment is laid out in huge parking lots so that two brigades can leave a plane and move almost as fast as the Iraqi tanks can come south from Basra. Fly and fight.

"Pre-positioning" as the concept is formally called, is one pillar of the US strategy in the region: deterrence based on blanket intelligence coverage of Iraq and total air superiority, backed up by enough hardware on site to allow a speedy response.

In August 1990, when Iraq invaded, it took the US three weeks to move a small rapid deployment force and months more to ship in enough material to fight a war. In October 1994, when it looked as if it might all happen again, the capability was in place.

Qatar, down the Gulf coast, now has a similar storage and maintenance facility, while talks are under way with the United Arab Emirates for pre-positioning there. "It's no secret," laughs an American diplomat. "We want the Iraqis to know."

And off the island state of Bahrain, where the US Fifth Fleet has its headquarters in another deliberately low-profile base, equipment for thousands of men is permanently stored in cargo vessels.

The fleet includes an aircraft carrier with 80 combat planes, Tomahawk missiles and, sometimes, nuclear-powered submarines. On board are 15,000 marines and troops with a further 9,000 available in Saudi Arabia, the focus of concern since last November's bomb attack in Riyadh. A further 170 aircraft are based on land.

It is unclear how long this expensive commitment will last but, to encourage self-reliance, the other pillar of Washington's Gulf strategy is equipping and training the Arab armed forces.

Kuwait's, starting from ground zero after the Iraq occupation, have come a long way since 1991. But discipline and training are poor, say Western military sources, against the background of a pampered society where hard work is done cheaply by foreigners and family connections count for more than personal merit.

Even in a period of unprecedented budget deficits caused by low oil prices and the cost of the Gulf war, lavish habits die hard and the emirate has earmarked \$12 billion for military spending until early next century.

Ten-year defence agreements with the US, Britain, France and Russia dovetail with a procurement plan drawn up by a joint US-Kuwait defence review group which some experts feel is beyond the emirate's needs, if not its means.

For little Kuwait, like all its neighbours except Saudi Arabia, does not have a population base to support a militia-style army and there is an argument — not used by Western defence industries — that it might be better served by concentrating on urban warfare skills and a large, Israeli-style, reserve force.

And now, in this trestle of the Gulf monarchies, there are rumblings from the bolder national assembly about cost, waste and corruption in the context of a wider debate about the economy.

"Before the war the emir would just say: 'Make it happen.' Now they have a free and open press," complained one foreign military man. "Democracy is not efficient."

Still, the big powers are selling hard on the basis of an informal carve-up: air force equipment supplied by the US, army by Britain, (250 Warrior fighting vehicles signed for in 1993) and navy



Women in Tehran consider the candidates in yesterday's election, 190 of whom were female

Voters pick names from vetted lists

Kathy Evans in Tehran

MORE THAN 3,200 candidates, including 190 women, competed in yesterday's election for some 270 seats in parliament. All had been carefully vetted beforehand by one of Iran's numerous clerical and Islamic law councils to assess whether they were sufficiently committed to Islam and the revolution launched 17 years ago in its name.

Choosing who would best manage the economy and bring down the inflation rate seemed the chief preoccupation of Iranian voters. Many felt it was time for specialists and technocrats to take the reins.

All who spent seven years in a prisoner of war camp in Iraq, now works for a government department. He said things had changed since the old days when only the elite travelled and saw foreign countries. "People watch smuggled American films. We know what life is like in foreign countries. I want a car, a nice apartment and a video."

Fatima scrutinised the list of candidates pinned to the mosque wall. She had chosen eight candidates so far, all of them women. "Only women will look after women's needs," she said.

"We need the men of religion as well as the scientists," said a Tehran mother, expressing the President Hashemi Rafsanjani's problem. He is likely to be left with a parliament divided evenly between religious radicals and moderates, and an uphill struggle to get the economic reforms he seeks.

US troops ready to fly and fight

Despite extravagant weapons purchases from the West, Arab forces cannot stand up for themselves in a tough neighbourhood

IN SCRUBBY desert north of Kuwait City is a nondescript compound called Camp Doha. No flag flies over its dun-coloured warehouses but a single sign warns: "Stop. Do not enter. This area is under control of the American army."

Behind the perimeter walls of the United Arab Emirates: from the corner of 9th Street and 1st Avenue, handy for the beauty parlour or the Patisserie, you can see Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, water bowlers and jeeps, all lined up and ready to go to war.

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Still, the big powers are selling hard on the basis of an informal carve-up: air force equipment supplied by the US, army by Britain, (250 Warrior fighting vehicles signed for in 1993) and navy

by France. The Russians get their slice too. Across the region, a staggering \$72 billion worth of weapons have been sold since 1980.

"Five years is not enough to rebuild an army that has been crushed"



Map of the Gulf region showing Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

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8 SPORTS NEWS

Racing

Quiet man of Clare a big noise in the Cheltenham Gold Cup

Michael Walker on Tom Costello, the Irish farmer who has set up a production line for champion National Hunt horses

MIDNIGHT COURT is the name of the man himself though (a rare event indeed) to get a somewhat more perplexing impression. "I don't want to talk about me, I'm just a farmer," was Costello's opening flourish.

Vincent O'Brien on the flat. To talk to the man himself though (a rare event indeed) to get a somewhat more perplexing impression. "I don't want to talk about me, I'm just a farmer," was Costello's opening flourish.

through their hands, did. The knowledge is being passed on as is the self-education. Of their 35 horses, Tom has said: "We're not really training them, it's more of a nursery education, teaching them to jump properly, that kind of thing."



Golden touch... Tom Costello, gurn of horseflesh

That could also be said of Costello and next week of the talent from west of the Shannon is responsible for another half-dozen horses, with the focus on One Man and Imperial Call in the Gold Cup.

ways an exceptional jumper. But then again, One Man is at his peak. "If either wins or neither wins, Costello will not be there on the day. He has only been to Cheltenham once, in 1987 when The Thinker won."

Big race success has included the once-potential Guy Harwood stable in recent years, but it could be more like old times at the Pulborough team at Sandown today with Amancio in the Sunderland's Imperial Call.

nessee King, who ran well for a long way over two and a half miles at Haydock on his reappearance. This has been his target for some time and he looks well in one run last season - a four lengths Ludlow second to Non Vintage, who is now 25 lb worse off.

Jodami waits for National

JODAMI, winner of the 1993 Tote Cheltenham Gold Cup, will miss this year's race next Thursday because of a bacterial infection. He will now be trained for the Martell Grand National at Aintree on March 30.

Sandown with form for the televised events

- 1.30 The Maiden General 2.30 Lord Dunsay 3.30 Corcoran 4.30 Amantele 5.30 Keel Row 6.15 Hurricane Lamp

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes Channel 4 and 2.55 Sandown with form for the televised events.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 4.05 SANDOWN IMPERIAL CUP HANDICAP HURDLE.

Chepstow with TV form

- 1.00 Marlboro's Air 1.30 Statur Stephanie 2.00 Amblebrook (imp) 2.30 Southwells 3.00 Greenwells 3.30 Belle Loo (imp)

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 1.00 Marlboro's Air and 1.30 Statur Stephanie.

Southwell (A.W. Flat)

- 1.10 The Lad 1.40 All Apologies 1.40 Beveridgeville 2.10 Heathcote Park 2.15 Lost Almonds 2.45 Society Girl 2.45 Goodwood 3.40 Goodwood Here

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 1.10 The Lad and 1.40 All Apologies.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.55 SANDOWN BARK HANDICAP HURDLE.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 4.40 MALL SANDOWN HANDICAP CHASE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 1.30 NET WITH THE TOTE HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.00 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

Ayr runners and riders

- 1.45 Fagan 2.15 Montevina 2.50 Sunday News's 3.25 Sennie Stee 4.00 Steve Stee 4.30 Golden Fields 5.00 Lord Laid

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 1.45 Fagan and 2.15 Montevina.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 3.30 BURNHAY DAK SPECIAL CARD NOVICE CHASE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.00 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.30 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 1.45 Fagan and 2.15 Montevina.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 4.00 ROSEBURY NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.30 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.30 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.15 JOHN BURTON BARK HANDICAP CHASE.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 4.00 ROSEBURY NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.30 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.30 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.50 AVONHEATH YOUNGSTER CUP HANDICAP HURDLE.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 4.00 ROSEBURY NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.30 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.30 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 3.25 WILLIAMS TROPHY HANDICAP CHASE.

Channel 4

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 4.00 ROSEBURY NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE.

BBC-1

Table with 2 columns: Race Name and Horses. Includes 2.30 SANDOWN HORSEPOWER HANDICAP CHASE.

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WORLD CUP CRICKET

Pakistan at ease for the big one

David Hopps in Bangalore

THE suffocating streets outside the West End hotel yesterday resounded joyously to the clamour of a Hindu community carnival, but such an exuberant expression of Indian confidence was less readily found in the hotel's air-conditioned ballroom as players from both sides gathered for a reception before India's quarter-final against Pakistan.

There is no guarantee that Pakistan will win today but they won the mind game. The psychological difference between the two sides was striking: Pakistan, upbeat and self-assured; India, restless and uncertain. This is one occasion when it is no advantage to be at home.

India v Pakistan is a fixture to eclipse any other in cricket, rendering even such traditional rivalries as England v Australia a skirmish by comparison. Both sets of players may be perfectly convivial, but politicians on both sides are looking to their egos. Woe betide any bowler who serves up a gentle full toss with fresh needed from the last ball of the match.

Intriguingly, for the first time, India face Pakistan with a Muslim captain, Mohammad Azharuddin. In the build-up to this game he was constantly accompanied by a Sikh bodyguard, who never strayed from his side. Asharuddin's station might serve Indian unity. "Even the Muslims in India are supporting us this time," said one observer.

Among the public is phenomenal, especially since it is seven years since politicians sanctioned the last meeting between the sides in India: a Nehru Cup match won by Pakistan. Unofficial bets (the usual collection of taxi drivers, drinks waiters and railway porters) suggest that India is again not confident of victory.

Pakistan's captain Wasim Akram had little personal cause to smile yesterday, still troubled as he was by a side-

strain suffered while batting against New Zealand. He had done it attempting his favourite slow over midwicket and was beginning to wish he had listened to all that advice earlier in his career to play straighter.

"I'd much rather be playing this match in India," he said. "So much is at stake and the side playing at home must cope with enormous expectations. We do not have that problem."

Wasim's involvement was likely, especially as he vowed to turn out even if he was only 50 per cent fit. His bowling was expected to be impaired, one factor that India calculated might tip the match in their favour.

Wasim, nevertheless, beamed at the sight of his Pakistan players, chatted contentedly to all and sundry while the Indians barely dared to pass judgment on the salad for fear of incurring the wrath of the management.

And India's World Cup to date has, indeed, resembled Cleopatra's "salad days", when they were "green in judgment". Their batting has been over-reliant upon Sachin Tendulkar, now the proud possessor of a goatee beard, and their bowling, Kumble and Srinath apart, has looked vulnerable. Their best prospects lay in a slow, low pitch, responsive to spin, and no Indian groundsman would prepare anything different.

Wasim's return to something approaching his best form has been a driving force behind Pakistan's World Cup challenge. Bowling only at 70 per cent capacity in Australia last year, Wasim insisted that he was gradually working up to full fitness for the World Cup. He has been as good as his word.

One Pakistan batsman who will revel in the occasion is the street-fighting fighter supreme and the only man to have played in all six World Cups. He will retire (again) after the tournament ends, and is going in the accepted fashion, assuring all around him that things are not as good as they used to be.



Bowled over... Dominic Cork is sidelined at yesterday's net session in Faisalabad

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN GILES

Cork down but not necessarily out of contention for England

DOMINIC CORK may still have a part to play in the World Cup should England survive today's quarter-final against Sri Lanka, writes Mike Selvey in Faisalabad.

It had been hoped privately that the seamer's injured knee would survive today's game but he was not even able to make a fitness test on the practice ground next door to the teams' hotel.

Cork has not been at his incisive best in this World Cup, due to a combination of tiredness and injury. But he has still managed to take eight wickets, more than any other England bowler.

But Phillip Bell, the team doctor, considers the injury a result of the amount of cricket that Cork has had to play in the last eight months. "It is an over-use injury," he said, "for which the only cure is rest, which of course just hasn't been getting."

Lara says sorry after race row

BRIAN LARA yesterday apologised for his remarks after West Indies' defeat by Kenya which he claimed had been taken out of context.

Lara had been quoted by an Indian magazine as talking Kenyan players that the defeat was not as bad as losing to a white team like South Africa.

Yesterday he said that the words had been "put in a different language" although Vinod Mehta, the editor of the magazine Outlook, said he stood by the story and revealed that the remarks were on tape.

Lara said: "I said that the defeat by Kenya was not as humiliating as when we lost to South Africa at the last World Cup. At that time South Africa had just come out of the apartheid era and the West Indies were the best team in the world."

Motor Racing

Hill cool about hot pursuit

Alan Henry in Melbourne

JACQUES VILLENEUVE laid down a marker as the most exciting new Formula One talent since Michael Schumacher when he finished his first practice session for tomorrow's Australian Grand Prix.

Hill can expect the most vigorous opposition to come from his own team. Yet, the Briton, as he has proved frequently in the past, can be at his most formidable when subjected to intense pressure.

Hill was also quick to point out that the revised grand-prix practice format — last season there were qualifying (not merely practice) sessions on both Friday and Saturday — means it would be a mistake to reach conclusions about the first race of the season after two hours' free practice.

Only when this afternoon's single, hour-long qualifying blast gets underway — in which the use of spare cars will again be permitted — can all the bets be regarded as off.

"The pace is definitely hotting up now and everyone is getting to explore the circuit in a bit more depth, so it is getting quite exciting," said Hill. "But this was not a qualifying session, so it is a little difficult to know what everybody is up to."

Meanwhile Villeneuve is warming to his role as the most distinguished F1 novice yet. Most newcomers to the

grand-prix milieu are bright-eyed, star-struck hopefuls. But Villeneuve is not intimidated and comes with impeccable credentials from the high-speed world of IndyCar oval tracks.

With experience of turning 225mph-plus qualifying laps at tracks such as Michigan and Indianapolis, it is hardly surprising that the 17-year-old average speed here at Melbourne left him barely rattled. The excellent Albert Park track is quick by the standards of F1 street circuits but a mere trip round a super-speedway car park compared with the Indy 500.

Villeneuve's time was all but matched by Jean Alesi's new Benetton B196, the former Ferrari driver gaining bounteous satisfaction in at having edged Schumacher for third place in the timing list.

But the German's new Ferrari F310 looked extremely promising for a car short on testing miles and the world champion's team-mate Eddie Irvine could also be well satisfied, lapping only 0.6sec slower.

Disregarding Ferrari as a potential winning force would be a mistake, even though Schumacher remains diplomatically downbeat.

"We have literally had no development testing with the new car," he explained. "We were able to sort out some of the worst problems but there are still little things cropping up all the time which we need to deal with."

"I regard the first two or three races of the season as an opportunity for testing. I don't think we are yet in a position to think in terms of good results, or even finishing races."

Rugby League

Challenge Cup semi-final: St Helens v Widnes

Wright turn to upset omens

Paul Fitzpatrick meets the Widnes centre still chasing a winners' medal after 10 years

DARREN WRIGHT refuses to make rash predictions about winning today's first Challenge Cup semi-final at Wigan.

Wright scored two late tries in a 20-0 win. "It was particularly satisfying to keep a clean sheet against them," says Wright, who remembers some of the finest Widnes sides struggling to come away from The Boulevard with any reward.

People tend to think Wright, now in his benefit season, is older than he is but he turned 26 only in January. The misconception probably stems from his long tenure in the first team. He got in at 17 and his career has developed into a model of unobtrusive craftsmanship, consistency, discipline and integrity.

During that time at Naughton Park he has experienced some intoxicating highs, particularly playing in that wonderful Widnes side that won successive championships in 1988 and 1989, and in which he and Martin Offiah formed the most lethal partnership in the business.

Once Wigan had fallen by the wayside St Helens were installed as cup favourites. The position is justified and there is a feeling that Saints will never have a better chance of claiming the prize that eluded them on visits to Wembley in 1976, 1987, 1988 and 1991.

The omens are good for them, too. In the semi-finals between the sides in 1989 and 1991 — both at Wigan — Saints won and in the six confrontations since 1990-61 the best Widnes have managed was a 2-5 draw. When the sides contested the 1976 final St Helens won that.

But Doug Laughton is back at Widnes after four years as coach at Leeds and, according to Wright, "there is a real buzz about the place. Doug breeds good team spirit and we feel very confident."

They did get there later, in 1992, but deep depression followed. Although Alan Tait and Offiah had already gone, Widnes, overwhelmed by financial crisis, allowed a side which Wright feels had the potential to challenge for the

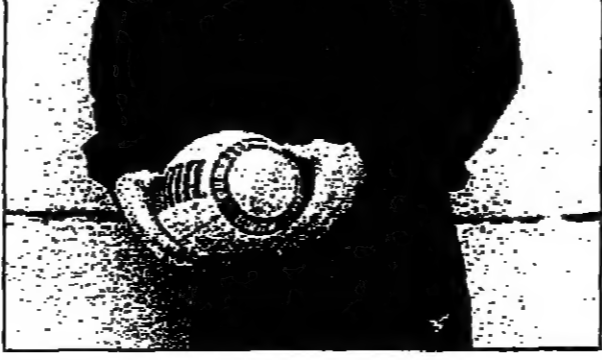
Super League judgment delay

DEFINITIVE judgment on the dispute between the Australian Rugby League and Rupert Murdoch's breakaway Super League will be made on Monday or Tuesday, writes Paul Fitzpatrick.

It was expected yesterday that Justice James Burchett will now spend the weekend considering a number of submissions made to the court in Sydney on Thursday and yesterday.

The English authorities are confident that Justice Burchett would not uphold the ARL's demand for Super League to be banned worldwide three weeks before the scheduled start of the new European League.

Warrington have agreed a three-year deal with Carlisle's 27-year-old Kiwi winger Richard Hazare. Workington Town were plunged into further disarray yesterday when Kurt Sorrensen quit as coach.



Wright... at the centre of Widnes' challenge

Rugby Union

Bath face debenture legal action

Robert Armstrong

BATH have become embroiled in an embarrassing row with their long-term debenture holders by making a heavy-handed attempt to have home Pilkington Cup and European Cup matches taken out of the existing deal.

A total of 320 debenture holders in the Recreation Ground's new Teachers Stand have been asked to give up their right to attend all home games without purchasing match tickets in return for a two-year extension of their 10-year debenture.

This is a disgraceful manoeuvre by the club to raise additional revenue at the expense of debenture holders who paid £1,000 each as part of a bona fide agreement made two years ago.

However, Bath were fully acquainted with the cup's financial arrangements when they sold the debentures in 1994, covering around a third of the new stand's 1,000 seats.

In effect Bath have offered the holders three options: a new 12-year debenture that excludes cup games; a similar cup-free extension to shorter-term debentures; or a buy-back offer that fails to take into account the inflation of the past two years. Some 70 holders are yet to respond to the letter.

The debenture row must be placed in the wider context of the Bath management committee's anxiety about generating sufficient cash to keep their best players together and improve facilities next season. In a letter to members last month the club chairman Richard Mawditt pointed out: "We now have to make a further £1 million-plus per annum to run the club and to encourage investors to inject the necessary funding to enable the club to act and run in a full, responsible and professional manner."

Apert from their original outlay, which helped pay the £1.2 million building costs of the Teachers Stand, debenture holders also pay £90 each in stand fees for each season covered by their agreement.

"I got caught up in a conversation with a couple of the guys," he added. "I know it's a big issue and it throws doubt on my character."

England the same but Thomas axed

ENGLAND have given a block vote of confidence to their triumphant Calcutta Cup side for next Saturday's meeting with Ireland at Twickenham which could earn them the Triple Crown, writes Robert Armstrong.

But Wales have axed their fly-half Arwel Thomas in favour of Neil Jenkins, one of three changes, in a bid to avoid another Five Nations whitewash when they meet the likely champions France in Cardiff.

Despite a meagre total of two tries in their last three games the England selectors have decided not to try any fresh combinations to improve their scoring potential. Jason Leonard, who this week escaped a possible ban for an alleged assault on Scotland's Rob Wainwright (due to inconclusive evidence), wins his 49th cap against an Irish team buoyed by last week's 30-17 victory over Wales.

Wili Carling makes his 66th England appearance. Dean Richards, the hero of Murrayfield, wins his 48th cap in a 10-year international career and Rory Underwood, the oldest player in the side at 23 years and nine months, plays in his 85th international since making his debut in 1984.

Thomas, who steps down to the Wales bench after four successive caps, has paid the price for last Saturday's nightmare performance, which was influenced partly by a costly blow to the head. Jenkins, Wales's record scorer with 419 points, wins his 39th cap and his 30th at fly-half, overtaking the record set by Cliff Morgan at No. 10 during the Fifteen.

Wales have also tried to inject greater penetration into their three-quarter line, preferring the 21-year-old Bridgend wing Gareth Thomas to Wayne Proctor. The front row, which at times was out-powered by Ireland, loses the Cardiff loose-head Andrew Lewis to be replaced by Christian Loader of Llanelli.

Wales' coach Alan Davies, the coach sacked by Wales last season is to replace Brian Hanlon at Bristol.

Cricket World Cup Quarter Final Coverage 0891 22 88 29

NatWest National Westminster Bank announces that with effect from 8 March 1996 its Base Rate is reduced from 6.25% to 6.00% per annum.

10 SPORTS NEWS

SOCCER: FA CUP

Sixth round: Chelsea v Wimbledon

Modern man breathing new life into the Blues

Martin Thorpe on Glenn Hoddle, who admits that his club are 'getting there'

WHEN Ken Bates appointed Glenn Hoddle manager of Chelsea three years ago this June, it sent out a signal to the football world that the club's latest attempt to reach the top would be made playing with style and imagination. Cynics looked at the club's recent history and its playing staff and sniggered.

When Hoddle got Chelsea to the FA Cup final, then the Cup Winners' Cup semi-final, the doubters were still unimpressed. Where was the style? Only when Hoddle persuaded Rudi Gullit to swap Genoa for the Fulham Road did the cynics accept that he was serious about addressing the means as well as the ends.

Now Chelsea stand eighth in the Premiership, two games away from Wembley and are starting to look a class act. Not only are they producing some sweet-flowing yet deadly movements with enough touch and technique to make Gullit feel more than at home but, unlike earlier in the season, they are more consistent, dominate games longer and hold possession more.

It has been a struggle. His first two years at Stamford Bridge were characterised by injuries to key players that left the team picking itself and made the use of his favourite sweeper system impossible, given the available personnel. He also made some questionable buys: Stein, Furlong, Rocastle, as well as failing to acknowledge Lee's talent earlier.

Yet this season things have started to slot into place. Injuries have been the main difference the last few seasons," he says. "Now we've got them pretty well under wraps and we've bought some quality players, it's starting to come together."

The summer purchase of Gullit specifically to play sweeper heralded the introduction of a system which, with the subsequent purchase of the penetrative wing-backs Petrescu and Phelan, has been instrumental in Chelsea's metamorphosis. And, when Gullit was injured, allowing Lee to emerge as the perfect replacement, Hoddle came up with the perfect solution: let the Dutchman forage in midfield.

"Playing Rudi there has worked excellent when we've played one up front and flooded the midfield, because we can get enough options in there that the ball's going to get to him. Sometimes if you play 4-4-2, it ends up a bit like a tennis match and that's where you don't want your best player."

There was never a chance that Gullit would be dropped. Every side needs a player like Rudi Gullit, a player who can win the game with one pass, who is a cut above the rest and a player who can hurt the opposition by doing what comes naturally. I just love watching him.

Hoddle refused to divulge his formation for today's game against Wimbledon. He switched to 3-3-2 for last Saturday's league game against



Arms and the man... Hoddle feels the tension during the dying moments of the third-round FA Cup tie with Newcastle

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

Monday's league game against the same opponents in response to the sturdier challenge and cloying pitch. But he could change it again. This season he has had the formations dancing: 3-4-1-2, 3-4-2-1, and even on one occasion 4-1-3-1-2.

Hoddle enjoys playing the strategist. "You have the teams scouted three or four games before and try to combat them. I enjoy that side of it. I haven't had that much opportunity because of all the injuries but, now I've got

strength in depth in the squad and people fit, I can use systems as I feel appropriate." This is modernist thinking: not for Hoddle 4-4-2 come rain or shine. And he is breaking through the cloud of scepticism in other areas, too. Training comprises lots of ball work to improve players' touch, technique and encourage two-footedness. Hoddle has even had two walls erected to kick against, just as street kids used to do.

Even the improvement on the injury front is down to a freshness of thinking. "We encourage players to look after their diet and body, do stretching exercises. We've also done a lot of work on prevention of injuries." Hoddle has been refining each player's system as well as the team's by employing a reflexologist for the past two years. It is a special foot massage that helps cleanse the body.

"There's blockages in your body that reflexology can clear. The players have had their eyes opened, especially on injuries. We've also got three physios because we believe in heavy massage as well, especially if you use the right oils."

Fifth-round replay Tottenham Hotspur v Nottingham Forest

Pearce to drag calf in mud

RAIN in the air, a badly drained pitch, a reshuffled team: it must be another "glory, glory" day at Tottenham Hotspur.

Spurs are at home in a fifth-round replay to a team that could be without their captain, both wingers and half their first-choice defence. Could Wembley be beckoning them again?

Much may depend on Stuart Pearce. Though his tender calf suffered a reaction on his return to the team in Munich on Tuesday, the Nottingham Forest captain is unlikely to be kept out of the side today.

"The calf muscle swelled up during the game and was very stiff afterwards," he said yesterday, "but I'm staying very hopeful. I'm desperately keen to face Tottenham."

Spurs have a couple of selection problems — "It would be an event if I could ever get my first-choice team out of that form," said their manager Frank Clark, "but they do not look as thorny as Forest's."

The wingers Steve Stone and Ian Woan could join the England centre-half Colin Cooper on the injury list. Paul McGee and Bobby Howe, who both scored against Sheffield Wednesday last Saturday, stand by.

Forest have won seven of their past eight games at White Hart Lane. "A fortnight ago we were struggling to find that form," said their manager Frank Clark, "but in the games since our confidence has returned."

Francis has not given up hope of Chris Armstrong recovering from the ankle injury he picked up in the first game against Forest. But Andy Sinton is Cup-tied and Jason Dossell suspended, which means he will change defence and midfield. The likely line-up will see Ronny Rosenthal restored on the left and Sol Campbell moving up from right-back to accommodate Justin Edinburgh.

Fifty years ago today Bolton Wanderers won through to the semi-final of the FA Cup. But, as Alan Brown reports, the day ended in disaster: 33 people died and 500 were injured in the stampede after a side-gate was opened and the crowd swelled to 80,000

The day Burnden Park became a graveyard

IT WAS the scene of a Lowry had captured so evocatively in "Going to the Match", one of his most famous "matchstick" paintings. Men and women making their way to Burnden Park, Bolton on Saturday March 9 1946 for the FA Cup quarter-final against Stoke City. A game not to be missed. But the day was to be remembered for the Bolton disaster, not the Bolton Wanderers victory.

During the second world war both the League and Cup had been suspended for six years. But in 1945-46 the FA Cup resumed. Starved of football, people flocked to the game. Uniquely, that first season, it was played over two legs. Bolton had won the first leg at Stoke 2-0 and thoughts were turning to Wembley.

A big game in the Cup had the added attraction of Stoke's favourite son, Stanley Matthews. On the other side was a 20-year-old who had spent his war down the pit. Nat Lofthouse, playing in his first FA Cup. "The build-up to the game was massive," he remembers. "Stoke had internationals like Neil Franklin but everyone came to see Stan, he put 10,000 on the gate easily, he was that popular."

A teenager at the time, Audrey Nicholls went to the game. "Nat and Stan were our heroes. Burnden Park was our Mecca it was so special to the town because the club had been so successful before the war, people were very proud."

The ground was dominated at one end by a vast open embankment that fell away from the railway line down to the pitch. It alone held a capacity of 28,000. Bert Gregory had just joined the Bolton ground staff. "The bank was pretty crude, just dirt really, with any old bits of flagstones they could get for steps. When it rained, the gaps filled with water and the mud spilled out but people didn't mind."

As the game kicked off the embankment was full and the gates were closed, leaving thousands outside. Not to be denied, supporters scrambled up to the railway line, jumped the sleepers and scaled the fencing. The side was opened and people poured through. How this game came to be opened has remained a mystery but Gregory tells the popular myth. "A man was in the



Standing room only... the crowd reaches down to the touchline as police attempt to regain control and rescue workers recover the bodies of victims

Boro expect a lift from Juninho

JUNINHO returns for Middlesbrough against West Ham today 24 hours after stepping off a plane from Rio, arrives Eric Sproston. The midfielder has been absent for a month, helping Brazil qualify for the Olympics.

Juninho's first task will be to arrest Middlesbrough's freefall through the Premiership. Bryan Robson looks unlikely to play two Brazilians, however, preferring to keep Branco on the bench until he is fully match fit. Middlesbrough's coach John Pickering said of the full-back, who has not started a game since December: "I wouldn't want people looking at him and saying 'he can't play'."

West Ham's Ilie Dumitrescu, who has not played first-team football since Tottenham's New Year's Day thumping of West Ham, is also expected to start on the bench.

Everton's manager Joe Royle has no hesitation in handing Marc Hottiger — granted a work permit along with Dumitrescu on Thursday — his first Premiership start of the season against Coventry.



Performance of the week: Steve Bruce (Manchester United), the rock upon which Newcastle's attack eventually foundered on Monday.

A N Other

CUMBERNAULD United have a lot to answer for in the case of this unmissable master of the monosyllable whose feet spoke volumes on behalf of the footballer's art. For eight years he walked in the parade gardens, then he became a red revolutionist and brought his fame to the already famous. Later his downs were as spectacular as his ups.

Last week: Peter Cormack (Nottingham Forest, Liverpool, Bristol City).

TEAM SHEET

Tottenham v Notm Forest

Spurs are still hoping that Armstrong will be sufficiently recovered from his ankle injury to lead their attack. Possential substitutes should start Ben Brannan on the left and Wilson or Campbell is likely to move up into midfield in place of Dossell (suspended), leaving a gap at full-back to be filled by Austin or Edinburgh. Slade, who played in the 1-1 win over Southampton on Saturday, stands by to replace Armstrong. Forest will again be without Cooper (knee) and Sproston (knee) and may have problems on the flanks, where Stone and Woan are still recovering from knee injuries. But expect Pearce to be fit despite suffering stiffness in his calf after returning to the team in the 2-1 defeat at Bayern Munich.

Chelsea v Wimbledon

Chelsea have Lee, Spencer and Peacock fit again and looking for first-team places. Lee will replace Johnson at the back, Spencer is likely to replace Spalding in midfield and Peacock may displace Furlong. Wimbledon have Hartford and Hoddle worth fit again. Hartford will return to midfield but Hoddleworth may have to serve as a substitute.

Aston Villa v QPR

Villa have doubts about Johnson and will almost certainly be without Sturton and Taylor, but they can recall Draper, reappointed from an ankle injury, to the midfield. Rangers will make changes to their defence. McDonald is expected to return in place of Peacock and Elliott is back from suspension to take over from Chalmers.

Everton v Coventry

Marc Hottiger will make his Everton debut replacing D Connor at right-back. Short takes over from Watson (hamstring) in the centre of defence and Amohia is on standby in case Ferguson suffers reaction surgery. In case Ferguson suffers reaction surgery to a groin strain, Coventry may be missing two former Evertonians — Richardson is suspended and Burrows may not recover from his hamstring injury in time.

West Ham v Middlesbrough

Middlesbrough will have both their Brazilians available. Juninho, who has been helping Brazil qualify for the Olympics, will start Ben Brannan on the left and Wilson or Campbell is likely to move up into midfield in place of Dossell (suspended), leaving a gap at full-back to be filled by Austin or Edinburgh. Slade, who played in the 1-1 win over Southampton on Saturday, stands by to replace Armstrong. Forest will again be without Cooper (knee) and Sproston (knee) and may have problems on the flanks, where Stone and Woan are still recovering from knee injuries. But expect Pearce to be fit despite suffering stiffness in his calf after returning to the team in the 2-1 defeat at Bayern Munich.

Aberdeen v Airdrie

Aberdeen will be without their captain McKimmie (knee) but Windass and Shearer return to the squad. Airdrie cannot field Hetherington, their recent signing from Aberdeen, who is ineligible, and may be without Black (calf).

Caledonian Thistle v Rangers

Rangers have McLaren clear to play after winning an appeal against suspension but will still be without the injured Gough, McCall and Ferguson and the ineligible Anderson. Caley have still to decide on the fitness of MacArthur, Noble and Christie.

TOMORROW

Leeds v Liverpool

Radebe and Worthington will return at full-back for Leeds if Giorgio (hamstring) and Kelly (knee) fail to return. Liverpool will make changes to their defence. Speed may return to the midfield after two weeks after injury from Blackburn. Liverpool have a concern about Wright, who is recovering from a groin injury.

MONDAY

Manchester U v Southampton

United's defence may be unchanged; Paterson has been told to take two weeks rest after a recurrence of the back injury. Southampton will be without Vassico (suspended).

Outside no pot of milk honey

Costello the fellow for Cheltenham, page 8

World Cup match that matters most, page 9

Hodde excels at formation dancing, page 10

SportsGuardian

A ROOKIE TAKES TO THE CIRCUIT AT THE AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX

Villeneuve makes quite an entrance

The grand-prix season starts tomorrow. Richard Williams smells promise in the singed air around Melbourne's Albert Park

WHEN Jacques Villeneuve was asked yesterday how he would be approaching his Formula One debut, he smiled and gave a one-word answer: "Aggressively." The French-Canadian, widely tipped to be the new star of the sport, is expected to lead a team of young drivers in the new Renault Formula One car.

The 1996 world championship series begins in Melbourne tomorrow, when 22 cars representing 11 teams — the smallest field for many years — will contest the Australian Grand Prix over the new Albert Park circuit, a fast and sinuous 3.9-mile track a five-minute tram ride from the beach.

Villeneuve's arrival is one of several reasons why this promises to be an unusually exciting season. And who would have made that prediction only two or three years ago, when the generation of Piquet, Prost, Senna and Mansell was slipping from the stage? The fear was that Formula One would find it impossible to replace such high-definition characters and that its big-name appeal would wane at a time when its economic base was under threat from the withdrawal of recession-hit sponsors.

But the presence here this week of such former champions as Jack Brabham, Phil Hill, John Surtees, Niki Lauda and Alan Jones — not to mention Stirling Moss, who won the last Australian Grand Prix held in Albert Park, exactly 30 years ago — is a reminder that grand-prix racing has a habit of renewing itself. Few would now dispute that the generation of Schumacher and Hill has delivered up a cast of characters every bit as compelling as their predecessors.

The extent of that appeal is best illustrated by the size of Schumacher's retainer this

season. Ferrari will pay Formula One's star performer £18 million to bring a happy resolution to the long struggle to restore the fortunes of the prancing horse. If he succeeds, they will consider him worth every penny, and more.

The possibility that the task is beyond even his remarkable powers is the key to the season, allowing others to dream and making the first race of the year a fascinating prospect. The late completion of Ferrari's new car meant that Schumacher arrived in Melbourne admitting that he needed to use the meeting as a

development exercise. Nevertheless, none of his rivals would dream of underestimating the German driver's ability to bring his team's previously diffuse energies swiftly into focus, and the car has already shown its ability to run in the top half-dozens.

If Schumacher should fall, the heir presumptive to his title is Hill, runner-up in the championship for the last two seasons. For the Englishman the proposition is simple: he must profit now from the technical superiority of the Williams-Renault team or forever renounce his claim to the title his father twice won in the Sixties.

Yet nothing about Hill's grand-prix career has been straightforward. Now his task is complicated by the arrival in his own team of Villeneuve, the 24-year-old son of another dead hero. The newcomer, last year's IndyCar champion, announced himself in Melbourne with smooth, confident performances in the early practice sessions, matching the Englishman for speed and rather outshining him for finesse.

Villeneuve has no intention of playing the faithful back-up man. "There are no team orders," he said after yesterday's practice session, in which Hill and he finished at the top of the timing sheets, separated by a fifth of a second. "And there's no reason why either of us should slow down to let the other one past. We'll be fighting each other. But in a clean way, I hope."

Had he contemplated becoming the first man since Giancarlo Baghetti in 1961 to win a grand prix on his world championship debut? "Well, the speed is there. But that's not the way I'm thinking about it. I'm thinking about going quickly, and fighting with the other guys at the front."

Conflict exists at all levels of Formula One. This week Max Mosley, the president of the FIA, motor sport's world governing body, chose to reveal one buried level by releasing correspondence between his office and some of the drivers, including Schumacher and Hill. Mosley's dismissive attitude to representations over safety, insurance and other matters suggests that he and Bernie Ecclestone, the FIA's vice-president and the man who turned Formula One from a semi-annual sport into a global business, are concerned to strengthen their proprietary hold on such a valuable asset.

It is not necessary to read very deeply between the lines to see in this an attempt to pre-empt the threat of incursion by a global business, considered to be confidential matters. "They were supposed to be private letters," he said. "But Max does that sort of thing. I'm surprised that he needs it, frankly."

There is also the threat of disruption to tomorrow's race by Save Albert Park, an ad hoc group of environmental activists already responsible for demonstrations in protest against the cutting down of



Reach for the sky... Jacques Villeneuve in practice at Melbourne's Albert Park in his Williams-Renault yesterday, when he was second fastest. PHOTOGRAPH: MEL HEWITT

Dream target has Venables quick on draw



David Lacey

ARTUR JORGE and his clip-on moustache belong to Central Casting. They are usually to be found half-hidden in a doorway just up from the marshal's office, waiting to shoot Wyatt Earp.

Jorge is the manager of Switzerland. This week, as he prepared, along with Terry Venables, to check out some of his country's Dutch opponents in the European Championship by watching Ajax play Borussia Dortmund in the Champions' Cup, he gave the usual foreigners' view that English teams should stick to what they know best.

England beat Switzerland 3-1 at Wembley last November. "When they played, it was old English football they played very well," quoth Jorge, "but when they tried to play the ball around European-style they were not very difficult to contain."

It would appear, then, that in trying to attain the status of a great team and intelligent team play which Ajax produced in Dortmund England are wasting their time. Much better, surely, to rely on those timeless virtues of speed, power, stamina and the will to win. The reality, of course, is that these qualities alone never won anything.

Venables would make a good Doc Holiday, even without the cough. His knowledge of dentistry may be sketchy but in a football argument few are quicker on the draw. It was, therefore, no surprise to find that during a long discourse on the Ajax performance Venables should have gone some way towards convincing listeners that in order to play like this it is not necessary to be born within kicking distance of a tulip field.

"It's amazing," he said, "Ajax are the best club side in the world and I don't know anyone playing the same way. That's unheard of, because everybody copies success."

"I think this [the Ajax way] is the way forward and we can do it," he added. "It's not just about experience. Ajax are putting 18-year-olds in there and playing the best football in the world. And it's not only about developing good habits in young Dutch footballers from seven upwards. Litmanen, George and Kantu [a Finn and two Nigerians] have only been there two years."

Venables believes that anything is possible provided intelligent coaching finds an intelligent response. And since he won the Spanish title for Barcelona with Steve Archibald, his predecessor having failed with Diego Maradona, he can speak from experience.

YET how many English teams, with the obvious exception of Liverpool over the years, conform to Venables's description of the way Ajax play? "The same things appear all the time," he said. "It's like a recurring dream. When they win the ball they all go off to their positions. The back three keep the ball until everybody's ready, then they'll go. It looks slow but the ball is in the pace."

They draw you in, then they hit you. If you play two up against them you'll never win. They'll always be coming back at you. Their wingers do the job of full-backs. And they can only do all this because they're intelligent people."

Should Venables manage this summer to convince Southgate he is another Blind or persuade Wise he is, in reality, a dormant David, then the next Government should consider appointing the retiring England coach Secretary of State for Education.

There is, however, still far to go. In Monday's match against Manchester United, Newcastle produced an inspired cameo from the Colombian Faustino Asprilla but the only domestic football of the week to approach, even remotely, the Ajax performance was played in the eight minutes it took the newly-angled Liverpool side to score three against Villa.

Yet there is no need to despair. In Dortmund a Dutch colleague, asked why Ajax had lost 2-1 to Vitesse Arnhem at the weekend, replied that the winners had "played like an English team".

Perhaps Jorge had a point, after all. But Oldie English football belongs on Boot Hill.

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F1 schedule 1996

1 Australian Melbourne March 10	9 French Magny-Cours June 30
2 Brazilian São Paulo March 31	10 British Silverstone July 14
3 Argentinian Buenos Aires April 7	11 German Hockenheim July 28
4 European Nurburgring April 28	12 Hungarian Hungaroring August 11
5 San Marino Imola May 5	13 Belgian Spa-Francorchamps August 25
6 Monaco Monte Carlo May 19	14 Italian Monza September 8
7 Spanish Barcelona June 2	15 Portuguese Estoril September 22
8 Canadian Montreal June 16	16 Japanese Suzuka October 13

Outlook race 16

Could I say how surprised I was by the coarse and sometimes violent tone of many of the calls I received from your peace-loving, vegetarian and nuclear-free readers? If they fight the way they talk, then the Royal Marines have need of them.

Letter from Peter Hitchens

Guardian COLLINS Crossword 20,596

A copy of the Collins English Dictionary will be sent to the first five correct entries drawn. Entries to Guardian Crossword No 20,596, P.O. Box 315, Mitcham, Surrey, CR4 2AX, by first post on Friday. Solution and winners in the Guardian on Monday March 18.

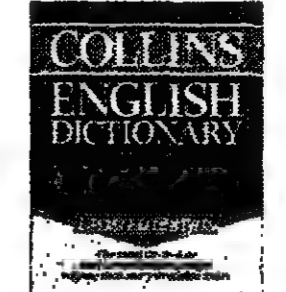
Name _____
Address _____

Tick here if you do not wish to receive further information from the Guardian Media Group or other companies screened by us

1 see 14
5 This metre has four feet, with a Liberal accountant in charge (6)
9 One of the 14,1 across making serving man try and change direction (8)
10 Bend over! That's old Greek justice (6)
12 Pronounce "pronounced" (5)
13 Like burrowing worms, but turning right with a coil, perhaps (8)
14, 1ac Where viniculture led to "Grenache, s'il vous plait!"

18 The slide from lucidity (12)
21 Specialist with nothing to record is at wit's end (9)
23 Quango doesn't begin to plot movements of birds (5)
24 Dood a mystery to herico? (5)
25 M as capital character (6)
26 Henry, a seldom seen follower of Salisbury (5)
27 Look in the mirror — it's a quiz (3-5)

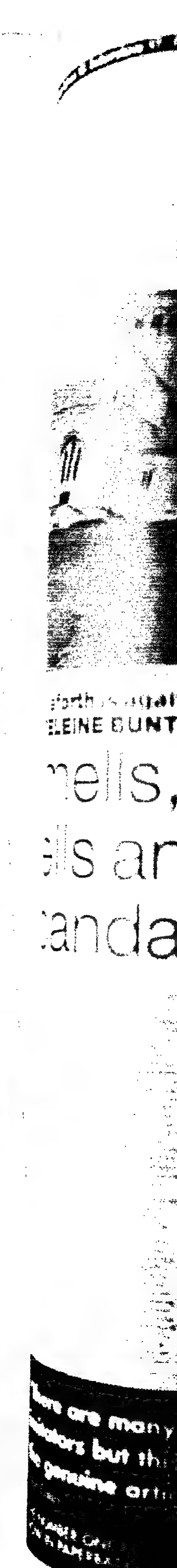
Down
1 Port having primitive power (6)
2 Walker at roundabout with no gaps in the passage (5)
3 Odd neither scarab nor



- 4 Measly old church music — a jig? (12)
- 6 Roman settler about to join one of the 14,1 across (5)
- 7 It's far out, it's heavenly, and left one without a mobile phone (8)
- 8 One of the 14,1 across. Mon Dieu! A hundred for a thousand? That's about right (8)
- 11 Elder brother toying the line with airy disposition (12)
- 15 That public sitting courses on, for example, cigar-rolling (4-5)
- 16 One of the 14,1 across he was, I hear, wholly involved in woodwork (2, 6)
- 17 No vessel for the Pacific (3-2-3)
- 19 Spoil in a basin of water (5)
- 20 Footsore as one of the 14,1 across (5)
- 22 One confesses to possession (5)

There are many numbers but the one defining or...

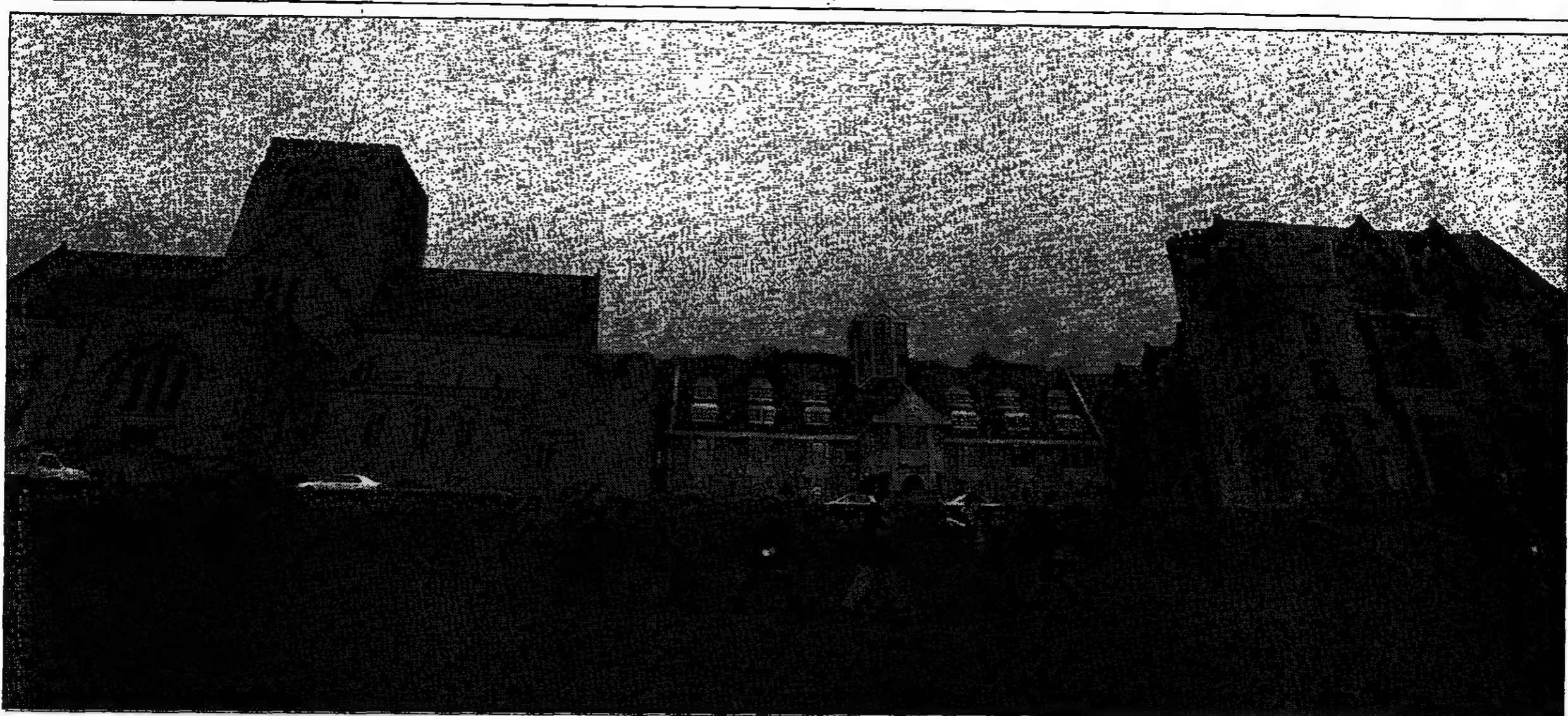
Crossword Solution 20,596



...page 9
 ...dian
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Saturday March 9
 Sunday March 10
 1998
 Page 13

The Guardian Outlook



Catholic elite... some of Ampleforth's pupils walk across part of the college's ample green acres; and (below) reflecting beneath the light of a stained-glass window

PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL STEWART

Ampleforth is again at the centre of controversy. MAGGIE O'KANE and MADELEINE BUNTING report on the troubles at the Catholic Eton

Smells, bells and scandals

FATHER BENJAMIN O'Sullivan chose a place called Munk's Wood to die. He suffocated himself with a black plastic bin-liner among the new snow drops and old oaks. Nearby were the graves of the Benedictine monks who have been educating the sons of Britain's Catholic elite for almost 200 years. On the hill above him, the boys and masters of St Thomas à Becket's House of Ampleforth College were celebrating the saint's birthday. Father Benjamin was found last Saturday.

By Wednesday, the Abbot of Ampleforth, Britain's Catholic Eton, had written to the parents of all the pupils in the school adjoining the monastery, telling them how the 34-year-old monk had apparently taken his own life in what "must have been a moment of great distress". The letter ended defensively, reminding the parents that the monastery was distinct from the school and that despite the "efforts of our advisers, some press stories which have been printed are simply untrue."

Father Benjamin's suicide note will, it is hoped, provide some clues as to why the young monk, who had been told just hours before his suicide that he was on course for a first-class degree in his music studies, should have taken his own life.

Yesterday Father Leo Chamberlain, Ampleforth's headmaster, upset and weary of having to deal with the tragedy, sat by the fire in his study overlooking the valley where the school's cricket and rugby pitches seem to stretch for miles on the North Yorkshire moors. "There's been all sorts of attempts in the papers to link this suicide with another case of sex abuse that we've had, but there is absolutely no connection. The newspapers are speculating and we seem to attract that kind of attention. Maybe it is because people see us as strange monks in a far-off Catholic school in the middle of nowhere, but anything that happens here seems to be picked up by the newspapers and gets columns and columns."

Columns and columns of bad publicity is the last thing an exclusive 12,000-a-year boys boarding school with falling numbers needs.

Ampleforth was last in the headlines in 1994, when four boys were suspended on suspicions that they had committed and the headmaster called in the police. Before that, there was the French kitchen maid who became pregnant, leading to three boys being sent home to take their A levels. A former chief accountant at Ampleforth College was recently jailed for two-and-a-half years after being admitted taking indecent videos of a 14-year-old boy from a

nearby town. The 55-year-old man had worked at the school for 29 years.

The most damaging scandals that hit Ampleforth—a Catholic enclave in one of the most feudal corners of England—usually involve sex. Cooped up in the valley on the edge of the North Yorkshire moors, 30 miles from the nearest town, are nearly 600 boys and some 100 monks. The only women are a handful of teachers, maistrons and domestic staff; some of the maistrons come from a local home for people with learning difficulties. Women just didn't register at the school except in the fevered imaginations of 600 masturbating boys, recalls an old boy. The result is the widespread, low-level homosexuality, common to any boys' public school.

"There was always the joke that if you were caught in bed with a boy, you got ticked off; if you were in bed with a woman, you were expelled. I left thinking women were either madonnas or whores. The place was full of porn mags and statues of the Virgin Mary," he adds.

The scandals first became public in 1963 when police investigated alleged use of hallucinogenic drugs, which led to a student "breaking out" at mass when he "saw" the boy beside him turning slowly into a lion.

Since then there have been long periods of calm in which the school has moved steadily

up the league tables. Father Chamberlain has been headmaster since 1992 and since then the academic results have been improving steadily—54 per cent of students now reach A or B grades in A levels. Father Chamberlain points to prominent Ampleforthians such as Lord Nolan, Andrew Knight and Christopher Tugendhat.

LUCY WARRACK has taught at the school for 16 years and is convinced that Ampleforth will be saved by its very Catholic ethos. "I think things have turned a corner in society. There are parents out there who still want to give their children a particularly Catholic education."

Father Benjamin's suicide eight days ago had nothing, Lucy Warrack believes, to do with the school. "I don't go for any of this thinking that it was because he was living in an iso-

lated monastic environment. This is a very warm place. For some boys who come to school here it can be the most secure time in their lives. They come back to be married by the monks, to have their children baptised by the monks. The experience stays with many of them all their lives. I think the suicide was just like if someone in a family dies. There was no obvious explanation for it."

Despite Lucy Warrack's optimism, the falling numbers at the senior school speak for themselves. Since the early seventies the number of Catholic independent schools in Britain has halved from 368 to 190 and last year two Benedictine boarding schools closed due to falling numbers.

The nineties rebellion against the muscular, macho, Catholic ethos, too, is growing and Ampleforth's once compulsory cadet training has been disbanded. "You had to say there was something a bit off about Catholic boys being ar-

Famous old boys

- Artes Frank Muir, Stephen Unwin, Rupert Everett (below right), Piers Paul Read
- Media Edward Stourton, Hugo Young
- Church and Politics Christopher Tugendhat, Lord Nolan, Cardinal Hume (above right), Bishop of Hexham and Newcastle Ambrose Griffiths, Christopher Heath
- Others James Gilbey, Phillip Lawrence



pired to run round killing each other every Thursday afternoon with air guns," says one old boy.

Founded early in the 19th century, the college has played a vital part in the increasingly comfortable accommodation of Catholicism in Britain in the 20th century. The visit of the Queen to Westminster Cathedral last year was a powerful symbol of how far Catholics have come from the days when they were viewed as dangerously foreign and unpatriotic.

Much of the credit for that can be laid at the door of Cardinal Hume, the Ampleforthian par excellence. Hume and others like him fitted in very well with the establishment because Ampleforth made them part of it. "His predecessor was Cardinal Heenan from Ilford, whose father was a fruit seller from Ireland and he didn't go down well at all," says Peter Stanford, a former editor of the Catholic Herald and author of a biography of Cardinal Hume. For generations Ampleforth has been able to rely on the loyalty of old boys to send their progeny there. In recent decades that loyalty has worn thin and the college has had to find new markets, turning to the Far East, particularly Hong Kong and Australia, to boost numbers, and has been forced to relax its entrance requirements. But the beauty and isolation of its location may be its downfall as trends change.

Today families don't want to banish their children to an institution accessible only at showy parents days every eight weeks. The BBC's Edward Stourton went to the school and says he loved his time there. But he is sending his son to Eton. "I can pop down the M4 in 40 minutes and see him play rugby instead of driving north for four hours," he says.

Although, for some, that isolation may be the school's attraction. As one lay teacher says: "The monks have dedicated their lives to the boys and they are giving them something they are not getting at home. Some parents have sent their sons here because they want to be rid of them."

In 1890 the school had more than 600 pupils, now the numbers have fallen to 536. The decline of Catholicism in Britain means that parents who still want to send their children to boarding school are less concerned about going Catholic. Eton now has more than 100 students who are RCs. Ampleforth is, however, convinced of its unique worth. Once parents have made the decision to send their sons there, they have obviously answered the other nagging questions about their children's education—questions about its elitism, its remoteness and a way of life that is almost totally without the presence of women. In the headmas-

ter's view these are "the bog standard usual left-wing kind of questions that we have to deal with."

However, Fr Chamberlain sees no place for girls at Ampleforth. He believes that it would be unnatural to bring teenage boys and girls together in the fastness of their Yorkshire school. "I know other places are doing it, but I don't see us doing that here. I think girls and boys perform better when they are educated separately."

The boys' bedrooms, which overlook the valley, are plastered with posters of Baywatch girls with just enough clothes on to be acceptable to matron. There's a sense of security about the school's 10 houses. Everyone knows everyone else and they follow their fathers and brothers through the same houses. They don't like to call themselves "elite" but they know that they are. They acknowledge that they, with a ratio of one teacher to 9.4 boys, are getting a unique chance. In each house of about 50 boys there are five tutors specially assigned to help them prepare for exams. All are supervised by a matron who says mass before lunch and offers sherry to visitors.

The College's tactics have been almost those of an entryist organisation: infiltrating the elite with Catholics who can protect and promote the interests of the Mother Church but always demonstrating that distinctive—and quintessentially English—brand of Catholicism which Ampleforth has pioneered. The faith is discreet and tactful, but this masks a contempt for the "dog's dinner" of Anglicanism, as one Ampleforthian put it, and a powerful sense of complacent superiority. As the author and Ampleforthian, Piers Paul Read was told, they were members of an exclusive elite—members of a public school and Catholics.

As long as there are teenage boys with money and hormones, there will undoubtedly be more "drugs and sex scandals" at Ampleforth. A suicide may not happen again for another 200 years, but for now the college continues to gently decline in numbers with no plans to change, confident that its own unique brand of Catholicism will win through.

Crossword 2055
 PACIST
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'There are many imitators but this is the genuine article'

The Times

THE NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER NOW IN PAPERBACK

le Carré

OUR GAME

'Highly recommended ...le Carré's reading is unsurpassable'

Spectator

THE NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER NOW ON AUDIO

Cherie becomes a prime target



Martin Kettle

BE IN NO DOUBT that they are out to get Cherie Booth. The Daily Express is merely the most heavy-booted hunter of Tony Blair's wife. But there are others in the pack, and they scent a kill. From now until the election,

the Cherie chase is on. Political wives, husbands and partners have had an easy time of it in this country — until now. Prime ministerial partners, unlike American presidents' wives, are shadowy figures to the public and have been permitted to remain so. In spite of her long affair with Bob Boothby, Dorothy Macmillan was never in the papers. Mary Wilson wrote her poetry, but kept herself in the background. Audrey Callaghan was allowed to get on with her life too.

Even Denis Thatcher, though obviously a highly newsworthy novelty, maintained the discreet tradition. As the forthcoming biography of him by his daughter Carol aims to show, Denis played a

blinder for 11 years at Number 10. He never caused controversy, never became an issue, never embarrassed the PM in any way. He was content to let the satirists create an image for him while he got on with his successful business career.

The present occupant of Downing Street embodies the whole tradition. Norma Major is an interesting and entertaining woman, but she stays out of sight, unprovoked, un-interviewed and un-gossiped about. The general public is almost entirely unaware of her existence, and the anonymity of her children is even more scrupulously guarded and respected.

These conventions will be blown apart if Tony Blair be-

comes prime minister. Unless she makes a very deliberate decision to avoid it, Cherie Booth will become an important public figure too, whether she likes it or not. She is already on the way to becoming part of the electoral battlefield. Whether by accident or design Britain is entering the era of First Lady politics. We had better get used to it. So must Booth.

The "they" who are out to get her are an amorphous bunch. The Tories, of course. The Tory press, of course. But she is also just another victim of our public culture. Our culture lays siege to private life, particularly the private lives of public people. It is one of the worst downsides of being a society without respect.

Why is this culture out to get Booth now? There are many reasons. Party it is political desperation. In spite of the government's best efforts Labour is still — see yesterday's 34.5 per cent poll lead — way ahead of the Tories. The Conservatives find it hard to land a serious punch on Blair himself, so they simply take a

leaf from the bully's book. They go for his family instead. The kids. The wife. All targets.

Partly it is because our politics are ever more presidential. This election is not just Blair versus the Tories but Blair versus Major. You could even say that this one is Blair versus the Tories, so centred upon the leader has Labour now become. In any party where power resides at the centre, those closest to him become crucial too. And no one is closer to him than Booth, not even Peter Mandelson.

But desperation and presidentialism, although both highly important, are not the whole story. Booth is a target because Labour is a target. A predominantly pro-Conservative press will inevitably hunt Labour (and Liberal Democrat) people more assiduously than they will hunt Tories. They never harass Tories about their choice of schools for their children. They don't publicise details of Tory politicians' summer holiday plans, they way the Daily Mail did to one shadow cabinet minister this week.

They don't try to turn Tory wives into harridan hate figures. These things are reserved for Labour.

This is partly because Labour is the enemy. But Labour also contributes to the situation it otherwise deplores by promoting its leaders' wives. I stand to be corrected on this, but I think it was Neil and Glynis Kinnock who began the happy couple curtain call tradition which has now become *de rigueur* after the party leader's big conference speech. The Kinnocks were and are a highly political and photogenic couple. It seemed very natural to give Glynis a share of the limelight. But it was a turning point. They set a pattern which may have outlived its usefulness, and may even be counter-productive.

Glynis Kinnock came in for a lot of the same aggro that Booth is now facing. Elizabeth Smith, a no less formidable figure than either her predecessor or her successor, managed to avoid it more successfully in her brief period as leader's wife. That suggests that there

are better and worse ways of managing these things — not merely the conference speech but the whole art of being a political partner. My feeling is that Smith had it worked out rather better than the more ambivalent Kinnock and Booth.

But another reason why they are out to get Booth is simply because she is a successful woman. A lot of men (and some women, including some successful ones) self-evidently cannot handle this. She is a QC. She earns a lot of money. She is married to a man who may be prime minister. She is untouched by scandal. She has the world at her feet. And they hate her for it.

It is no accident, as the Trotskyists used to say, that Labour women have a hard time from the press about their private lives. They get it for being Labour and they get it for being women. If they are even slightly affluent or middle-class they get it for that too. There is absolutely no doubt that there are double-standards. No Tory woman faces the same pressures. No man of any party does either.

The saga of Hillary Rodham Clinton should haunt Cherie Booth. What ever you may think about the Clintons, it is clear that the hounding of Hillary is about something more than disappointment at the Clinton presidency. For reasons which lie in the emotions as much as the mind, American culture seems to seek some form of collective revenge on her. It is not just Republicans who are at work here, though they obviously benefit from it. It is some sort of national *Schadenfreude* about successful women.

The British version of the anger which targeted Hillary Clinton now also has Cherie Booth in its sights. It is profoundly unattractive. As far as I know — and I know a little — Booth is what she seems, an intelligent, successful, progressive, independent and unelected political woman. It is a depressing thought that the only role that such a person can safely play in our culture seems to be to stay at home and look after her kids.

What happens when people are freed after wrongful conviction? QUENTIN VAN MARLE meets a man and a woman who have found freedom more traumatic than serving an unjust prison sentence



Free again... Emma Humphries with supporters

A life sentence on the outside

WHEN Eddie Browning left for work one summer evening a few years ago, he was reckoning on getting home sometime in the early hours. He had no way of knowing that he wouldn't be seeing home again for six years. Browning made £3 a night as a nightclub doorman and doubled as a bouncer when necessary. Trouble was nothing new to the former Welsh Guardsman. But murder was. It was Saturday, June 25, 1988 — one week after 22-year-old Marie Wilks, a seven-months pregnant Worcester housewife, had been abducted from an emergency callbox on the hard shoulder of the M50. Police discovered her body 48 hours later down a steep, not low two miles further up the motorway. She had been stabbed in the throat.

It was a brutal killing and one that so disgusted the nation that the West Mercia CID was under pressure to make an early arrest. Within days, the trail led them to Eddie Browning. Various witness statements and Browning's own movements that weekend fitted like a plug into a socket. Better still, the suspect had a criminal record including actual bodily harm. Browning was taken in for questioning and held for several days. Despite an absence of forensic evidence, plus eyewitness clearance at an identity parade, he was charged with the murder of Marie Wilks and held on remand for 10 months. After a six-week trial at Shrewsbury Crown Court, Browning was given a life sentence, with 25 years minimum recommended by the judge.

Thus, it seemed, justice had been done and the nation could breathe a sigh of relief. However, unbeknown at the time to all but a few police insiders, the West Mercia CID had withheld crucial items of evidence from the court — and thereby succeeded in jailing someone who, it is now accepted, was innocent of this nasty but well-publicised crime. Four years after conviction, coarsened evidence surfaced and the Court of Appeal released Browning in May 1994. Browning, now 43, is an affable, powerfully-built man with striking blond hair and penetrating blue eyes. Relentless efforts by Julie, his wife of 15 years, to clear her husband's name during his six years of incarceration does not preclude their relationship from continuing problems. Almost two years after the appeal court, Browning remains unemployed (some say unemployable). He harbours a controlled anger towards those who point fingers in the street and in noisy Rhondia pubs. In particular, he holds a powerful grudge against the police, convinced that they're out for another go at him. The situation is perhaps not helped by his reputation around those tribal, close-knit valleys as a tough nut not to be messed with.

How do individuals like Browning, convicted by law and then exonerated by law remove the seemingly-indeletable stigma of murder and the lingering suspicions which await them outside prison walls?

Browning is not alone in his affliction from a condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder — a recognised indisposition registered in the International Classification Of Diseases, and now becoming widely accepted in the medical profession as an ineluctable side-effect of wrongful imprisonment. Dr Chris Hunter, a forensic psychiatrist and director of Caswell Clinic at Bridgend, South Wales, is sympathetic. He describes post-traumatic stress as a "disorder that usually afflicts its victims within six months of what are perceived as potentially catastrophic events. This results in sudden intrusions into the brain, flashbacks, obsessions, massive anxiety attacks, mood swings, nightmares,

sweating and shaking. Conviction for murder that one didn't commit will easily bring it on. It's a disorder that won't necessarily go away when a prisoner is released; that's when it can really begin."

In 1985, following a four-day trial at Nottingham crown court, 17-year-old Emma Humphries was convicted of first-degree murder: she stabbed Trevor Armitage, 33, her live-in lover. Throughout an 11-month remand period and during the trial, when she was unable to take the witness stand, Humphries described herself as a "walking corpse amid a complete nervous breakdown".

ALTHOUGH Armitage held down a job as a double-glazing salesman, he was an established drug dealer and Emma Humphries's pimp. After an awful childhood, Humphries got involved with drink, drugs and street prostitution (between the ages of 11-16 she was in 11 homes for problem children). Precarious and frequently violent as the relationship with Armitage was, it nonetheless offered a roof and, paradoxically, for a while at least, more security than she'd ever known. The killing occurred one evening when Armitage brought home a group of drunken mates expecting an on-the-house gang bang. Humphries, a slightly-built

woman, thrust a kitchen knife into Armitage's stomach, then fled on to the street — hailing a passing motorist who took her to a police station.

That was the beginning of a prison term at Her Majesty's pleasure — effectively a life sentence. As she had drawn the short straw during most of her life, prison probably seemed little more than a natural progression. It took Humphries more than seven years to seek outside help, which she eventually did by making contact with Justice For Women, a feminist pressure group set up to help cases such as hers.

Despite an unofficial offer of parole, Humphries and Justice For Women decided to fight for an acquittal on the grounds of cumulative provocation. The battle took a further two-and-a-half years. After 10 years in prison, Humphries was released from Holloway in July last year. And her case altered the law, insofar as the courts now accept proven cumulative provocation as a defence for justifiable homicide. The teenage killer of years past is now an intelligent 27-year-old with vivid memories of that awful night, which she speaks about as if it happened 10 minutes ago. Of Armitage she says: "He died before he could do anything else to me." In the eight months she's been out, her self-confidence has taken a tumble. She lives in a women's hostel in north London with one cat and nine

gerbils for company. Most of the time, she withdraws inside her room, reading books, listening to music and writing poetry (the Daily Express has published her work).

That Humphries is also a victim of post-traumatic stress is beyond question. "I feel that there are eyes everywhere, staring at me," she says. "When I came out, I was on 29 tranquillisers a day. Now I'm on nothing, but I haven't any clear direction in life, none at all." Is she ever tempted to go back on the game? She nods. "Yes, sometimes. It could happen yet." To date she has had one meeting with a psychiatrist, but in common with Eddie Browning and others, it was for compensation purposes.

Julie Birdell, a founder member of Justice For Women, says: "At the very least, Humphries's solicitors should have argued her case on the grounds of diminished responsibility. She deserves to be repaid for all the stress she's had." By and large, the Home Office prefers to award departing prisoners, innocent or not, a maximum cash payment of £36 on the day of release, then wash its hands of them. No professional counselling is offered, no advice is given, and no responsibility acknowledged for the tough times which almost certainly lie ahead. In the case of wrongful imprisonment, although financial compensation is available

from the public purse, no apology is offered.

The common denominator between Emma Humphries and Eddie Browning isn't just the stigma of a murder charge. It lies somewhere in the aftermath. "Before I can do anything else, I need my life back," says Browning. That won't happen. Things cannot be now as they were before June 1988 any more than they can be for Emma Humphries since 1985. The difference is that she has become anonymous and introverted while he goes for the high profile, absolutely inebriated about the injustice of his long ordeal.

The Home Office took eight months before paying compensation roughly equal to a yearly paypacket of £12,500 for the time he spent in jail. "No amount of money can make up for what was done to me and my family," he says angrily. "I'd love to get my hands on the bastard who killed Marie Wilks. I really would. He didn't only take her life — he took mine as well." Last Wednesday Browning was given three months' imprisonment for driving while banned, which he hotly contests. A strongly-worded letter from Dr Hunter urging a non-custodial sentence was of no avail. Hunter asserts that another jail term on top of the post-traumatic stress could be enough to send Browning, who is talking of suicide, over the edge. Browning was released on bail pending appeal later this month.

MICHAEL WHITE sifts the Smooth from the Hairy candidates among the up-and-coming Tory generation

Seat-seeking missiles

AT THURSDAY night's post-debate reception in the Oxford Union, thrusting young Tory wannabes hover respectfully around Peter Lilley, who has topped the evening's bill. In the corner the lads from Ruskin, the trade union college, prefer to get stuck into the booze. Even at university, the dividing line between the Smooth and Hairy political tribes is apparent. Labour Clubs at Oxbridge — or anywhere else — are packed with scruffies who dress and talk like, well, like students. Power dressing. New Labour-style, comes later — if at all. Their Tory counterparts, terrifyingly self-assured many of them, look like em-

bryo MPs, already polishing their dispatch box manner in the Union. But has anything really changed since Messrs. Gummer and Howard, Clarke and Lamont, Leon Brittan and Norman Fowler did the same at Oxbridge in the early sixties? There is a thesis which says that, after a decade in which Margaret Thatcher's apparatus at Conservative Central Office consciously tried to broaden the social mix — the "arrivistes and gargates" as Julian Critchley disdainfully put it — the old networks are back. Eton or Charterhouse, a smart Oxbridge college, a job at a bank or a stint at Central Office, marriage to a peer's well-heeled niece to solve the money bit and reassure selection conferences that we're not gay. Bingo! An MP by 30! The London Evening Standard this week ran a Bright Young Things feature to that effect.

The evidence? Well, there's David Cameron, 29 and head of corporate affairs for Michael Green's Carlton Communications. After Eton and an Oxford first in PPE, he ran the political section in the Conservative Research Department (CRD) Cameron was in the thick of the 'Ed campaign, worked for Norman Lamont at the Treasury and was rescued by Michael Howard when Ken Clarke dropped him. Currently on holiday in the West Indies, Cameron is engaged to Lord Astor's step-daughter, Samantha Sheffield ("an heiress"). He is also adopted Tory candidate for Stafford, (Con maj 7,285). It would take a 6.7 per cent swing to get him out. "He will rapidly become a PPS," trills the Standard. But Cameron is the exception — clever and lucky. Of the 22 Tory candidates under 30,



David Cameron... the exception — clever and lucky

among the 340 so far adopted, the rest don't have a prayer. They are simply winning their diamond spurs in hopeless, borpy-handed seats. Thus genial Telegraph columnist Boris "the Jackal" Johnson, 33, Etonian son of a distinguished Eurocrat, will need a 10 per cent swing to take City of South. Edward Vaizey (aged 27, Oxford, CRD and the Bar) is the son of the late John Vaizey (a Wilson "laverdie list" peer) and critic Ma-



Lizzie Noel... faces Tony Blair in Sedgfield

rina Vaizey. He is only slightly better placed in Bristol East. As for his ex-girlfriend, Lizzie Noel (28) "thinks she's born to be prime minister" — she faces Tony Blair in Sedgfield (Lab maj 34,2 per cent). Being a one-time prison psychologist may help, living in Belgrave Square may not. That CV is not typical, either. The current crop of first-time Tory candidates does in-



Boris Johnson... needs a 10 per cent swing to win

clude the usual swathe of barristers, political advisers and City slickers. But not all are under 30, on the metropolitan fringes of the upper classes, got pissed at exclusive Oxford drinking clubs or lost the presidency of the Union or the Conservative Association by one purlined vote. Like Tony Blair, Cameron rarely went near the Oxford Union. Nor are they automatically rightwing Hoary Henrys. Talk among seat-seeking

obsessives and you learn that Christopher Heaton-Harris (Leicester South) runs a fruit and veg wholesale firm, is 38 and a football referee — "a nice bloke". Pembroke's Robert Buckland, 27 going on 50, says chums, is an old-fashioned Welsh Tory, easily mimicked by colleagues.

Chesterfield's Tony Benn will be facing Martin Porter, 29, a group financial analyst manager, who is the same age as Mark Francois (Brew East), warily described by some Tories as "rather rightwing". That distinguishes him from Thurrock's Andrew Rosindell (29) whom a journalist described as "very rightwing". He is famous for having submitted a photo of himself and his bulldog for his party conference pass. Tory HQ cut Rosindell's face out of the photo and sent a pass for the dog. That sounds a bit Hoary Henry, but it isn't. What the trend may really be highlighting is a greater return to pragmatism than conventional wisdom suggests. After the bewildering

Major years, selection panels have no objection to upper middle-class applicants who sound as if they know what's what and are biologically nimble-footed. It also confirms the all-party trend toward the professionalisation of politics: school, university, party functionary, MP. At the Oxford Union on Thursday, his energetic past-president, Matt Guy, already admitted to doing menial labour at Conservative Central Office before a Union debating tour of the US. But Balliol's Iain Corby, who took on Lilley in debate, offers a different perspective. Equally smooth and confident, he went to a Farnborough comprehensive, before sixth form at Charterhouse and on to Oxford. Yes, he attends monthly Coningsby Club dinners at the Carlton to grease up to ministers and several chums already work for MPs. He works for Barclays, a real job before politics. "Going to work for an MP is a continuation of the games we play here. I do worry about that." Point taken.

16 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In defence of Cherie picking

NOBODY could be in any serious doubt about the purpose of my advertisement seeking details of Cherie Booth's election campaign. I am trying, quite openly, to find out what her views are and then to write about them. It is absurd to imagine that this intelligent and highly-political woman never discusses major issues with her husband, and ridiculous to suggest that such a couple do not influence each other's ideas. So it is a perfectly legitimate exercise to obtain election documents and details of speeches made in public during an election campaign. Nor do I need some den of spin doctors to tell me that this is a good story. This project has been my own idea from the start. Could Patrick Wintour say the same about the inspiration for his article (Express puts Cherie Blair in dock, March 8) and its bedevilling, hysterical tone? As to my membership of the International Socialists in the early 1970s, I am quite happy to talk about it at length to anybody who is interested. I have changed my mind, rather than my image, and therefore have nothing to conceal. Could I say how surprised I

was by the coarse and sometimes violent tone of many of the calls I received from your peace-loving, vegetarian and nuclear-free readers? If they fight the way they talk, then the Royal Marines have need of them. Peter Hitchens, The Daily Express, 246 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 9UX. THE Daily Express may be in danger of shooting itself in its own foot if, as you report, it plans to let Peter Hitchens wheel Tony and Cherie Blair's 1979 election manifesto out to damage Labour's electoral chances. The call for the removal of Cruise missiles (in 1983) will find a positive response in today's electorate, according to a Mori poll (September 15-17 1995) 51 per cent of British people believe nuclear weapons are not necessary for our defence. It's time our leaders woke up to the fact that opposition to nuclear weapons is not a moral position to be abandoned in the interests of political expediency, but may be a voter-winner. Iwan Gill, 38 Yarnalls Hill, Oxford OX2 9BE.

C is still for comprehensive

ROBIN RAMSAY attacks Labour's education policy, claiming that seeking high standards in education is betraying those from working class backgrounds (Letters, March 8). My speech to the Social Market Foundation — to which he and Bob Moon alluded — was about the renewal of the ideals of those who pioneered comprehensive education, as your leader noted last Saturday. It was about how, in too many cases, those ideals have been lost — and examining ways in which the practice in the best comprehensives can be spread to others. Patronising those who live in deprived urban environments with an expectation of failure will not help my con-

stituents or those in other working-class areas to escape the poverty trap — as it would not have helped me. High standards of education, good quality teaching and the development of study centres to put them on an equal footing with those with the well-endowed homes described by Mr Ramsay are vital. But so is an end to the low expectations which assume that nothing can be done to improve the education of working-class children. There is one C word which is anathema to Labour's education policy: complicity. I make no apologies for that. David Blankett MP, Shadow education spokesman, House of Commons, London SW1 0AA.

Ship-shape policy on the sea

THE public accepts the segregation of the sleeping and living quarters of crews and sailors at sea (Pride and prejudice in the services, March 6). It recognises the importance of retaining a distance between men and women working in close confines for long periods of time. It understands that fully mixed showers and sleeping areas would seriously affect the morale and efficiency of the ship's company. For the majority of heterosexuals, however, sharing a mess with homosexuals is equated to sharing with the opposite sex, with the likelihood of equally deleterious results. Personal space on a ship must be an enclave free from

sexual undertones, real or imagined, in the same way that any civilian home is a private place from which to escape the rigours of work. To assign separate living space to gays and lesbians could be a solution, but one which, in view of the small numbers concerned, is sadly impractical. It is a pity that the decision to maintain the ban against gays and lesbians from the armed forces has been perceived as pandering to senseless discrimination when it is actually a product of common sense. Louise-Marie Abraham, Sub-Lieutenant, Royal Naval Reserve, Address withheld.



APPLAUD Radio One's decision (March 8) not to play Status Quo and the Beatles because they are old and boring. Surely it is time to extend this principle to other areas of public life. I look forward to newspapers refusing to print stories about the Tory Party on the grounds that it has been around for ever, and has no attraction for young people. Ewan O'Brien, 145a Stoke Newington High Street, London N16.

Labour rights and wrong

HOPE that public outrage at the leak of the Cabinet's consideration of proposals to exclude employees of small firms from employment protection legislation does not start from the same premise as your editorial on the subject (Workers have rights too, March 8) which appears to suggest that present employment rights are acceptable. They are disgracefully inadequate. Present unfair dismissal law excludes most workers with less than two years' service from making a claim. Indeed, a worker is not even entitled to know the reason for his or her dismissal if dismissed within two years. Present law has failed to extend protection to the growing army of workers not in standard employment contracts. A large compensation for workers found to have been unfairly dismissed is under £3,000. Maximum compensation limits have not been increased in line with inflation. Average compensation for workers found to have been unfairly dismissed is a factor of over 2.5 (some of us can see no justification for maximum limits on a week's pay or total compensation for losses anyway).

A further irony is the freedom of the employer to dismiss with impunity workers whom he has provoked to take industrial action. Finally, your editorial misrepresents the policy intentions of the law as giving workers the right to seek damages for unfair dismissal. In fact, it was intended that unfairly dismissed workers should get their jobs back; it falls so far short of that that less than 1 per cent of applications for unfair dis-

missal result in re-employment or reinstatement. Mr Heselton may have done a service by making his suggestion. In opposing him, we must avoid the danger of defending a status quo which requires workers to abandon most normal democratic rights whilst they are at work. Daniel Vuillamy, Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations, The University of Hull, 49 Salmon Grove, Hull HU6 7SZ.

I AM sorry that the Guardian has opposed the Government's proposal to remove some employment protection legislation from small firms. I have never understood why employers and employees have not been able to contract together without the interference of Parliament. But the legislation should mainly be judged on its overall effect. Figures speak louder than words. Since the original Employment "Protection Act" was passed 20 years ago, unemployment has doubled. In other European countries such as Germany, where employment legislation (including minimum wage legislation) is even stronger than here, unemployment is worse. You recognise this fact in your leader ("British workers are amongst the least protected in the EU") but draw the wrong conclusions. In the US, where in the post-war period unemployment has averaged about 5 per cent, was worse than in the UK, legislation is now less stringent, and unemployment rates compare very favourably with those in Europe. The reason for this is much to do with "protection". In the coming global economic wars, a flexible labour market is one of the keys to winning or losing. In Europe, Britain stands alone in working towards this goal, and should have the courage to continue. A D Harris, Managing Director, L G Harris & Co Ltd, Stoke Prior, Bromsgrove, Worcs B60 4AE.

THERE was some interesting linguistic activity going on during the exchanges at Prime Minister's Questions in the Commons on Thursday afternoon. The employment rights of workers in small businesses, we learn, have now become "red tape" (such workers obviously being inferior citizens because of where they work), and in its deregulation zeal the Government is removing only "unnecessary" bureaucracy. Who is it, however, who is defining "unnecessary"? Peter Bolton, 80 Collier Road, East Sussex TN34 3JS.

OUR Government consistently rejects economic and social initiatives emanating from Europe, often claiming that Britain must retain its independence, whilst also implying that we have nothing to learn from foreigners. How odd therefore, that so many senior Conservatives want Britain slavishly to follow the tiger economies of South-east Asia. Or does sovereignty matter when there is a chance of further cutting the wages and welfare of British people? Bob Hurry, 22 Rivers Street, Bath BA2 4EA.

How is life a lottery if Camelot always wins the prize?

THE Director-General of the National Lottery, Peter Davis, thinks that the £10 rule change was "a clarification of the contractual rights of players" (Lottery drops guarantee of £10 for three numbers, March 7). Yesterday, I bought my regular ticket of one set of numbers for five weeks, understanding that if I correctly forecast three numbers in a given week, I was guaranteed £10 — Camelot's explanation of the contractual rights, not mine. I now understand that they will not honour their promise ("If you have matched any three numbers from the first six main numbers drawn in any order, you win the Match Three prize. This is a fixed prize of £10"). Anybody reasonably numerate could see that it is statistically possible, although highly improbable, that the Camelot could be required to pay out more than the week's prize fund. Surely the risk they undertake is the same as that of a turf accountant or casino operator? And what is Boris's role in this? Bob Jones, 14a St Helens Crescent, Hastings, East Sussex TN34 2EW.

SURELY the current fuss about our National Lottery is focusing on the wrong end of the prizes available. Whilst it will be galling to have the minimum reduced to less than £10, this is in line with the Football Pools' current rules when there are over eight score draws on the coupon. Changing this maximum payout would have been a better use of their lottery — I'm happy for those who have been made multiple millionaires, but I haven't heard any complaints from big pools winners who have to make do with a mere £1 or £2 million. 25 Kenilworth Road, Basingstoke.

CAMELOT wants to play without having the remotest chance of losing. A boycott of their lottery — replaced by buying scratch cards for the numerous charitable organisations that now have to raise funds in this way — would show them that we do not want to play by their rules. And could hurt them in the only place they care about. Mark Povey, 3 Hyde Street, Hartford SG14 3AL.

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A minister full of faith

HAVE seen Beatrix Campbell's article on the Royal Trust (Faith healers at work in Irish hospitals, March 5). Your readers will wish to be aware of the following facts which the article failed to address. The Royal Trust is of critical importance to the health service in Northern Ireland. It provides most of the regional specialities to the whole population. It also meets the needs for acute hospital services of the local population of North and West Belfast — without regard to religious affiliation. It enjoys an international reputation for the expertise of its staff and the quality of its care. To suggest that government funding policies will "make it impossible for the Royal to provide the services planned for the next year" is nonsense. The Royal's income in the current financial year is around £120 million. This figure reflects the outcome of my management executive's arbitration on a contract dispute between the Royal Trust and its principal purchaser, the Eastern Board. That arbitration was based on contract guidelines which applied across the health and social services in Northern Ireland. The Royal has been treated no differently to other trusts, including the Belfast City Hospital Trust, which also serves the needs of both

communities. Moreover, the Board of the Royal Trust has accepted my offer of short-term financial help both this year and next year to enable the trust to bring its income and expenditure into line. The Government in Northern Ireland has willingly adopted the Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment administrative guidance, which was developed from a UK-wide initiative on equality proofing. As evidence of its openness on the matter, the Government publishes an annual report on its implementation. Of course, a broad range of interest groups, including the Union trade union, have prayed PAFT in aid of specific grievances, but the guidelines must be applied to complex administrative issues which may not be as black and white as some would wish. Finally, there is no greater support of the Government's support for the Royal Trust and the people of North and West Belfast than its commitment to a major rebuild of the Royal Victoria Hospital, announced in June 1995. An investment of £65 million deserves, at least, acknowledgement. Malcolm Moss, Minister for Health and Social Services, Dundonald House, Upper Newtonards Road, Belfast BT4 3SF.

Unhappy Patten for the future

CHRIS Patten's eagerness to learn from Asia is to be welcomed but it was not just Tory right-wingers who were left "choking on their cornflakes" by his interview (Still the governor, March 8). Pointing to the lower tax and public expenditure rates in Hong Kong and elsewhere, he argues that this strategy would also bring higher employment in Britain and Europe. Readers should be cautious about this crude causal relationship. "Tiger economies" like Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong itself are city states where lower levels of public expenditure are plausible. Others, like South Korea, have achieved high growth rates only at vast social expense and a level of union bashing that even Mr Heselton would balk at. And no mention is made of the protectionist strategies that nurtured fledgling Asian industries in their formative years — all of which are now unacceptable in Europe. The governor would do well to look again at the lessons Europe should learn from Asia. Anyone who has lived and worked at the grassroots level there must wonder how Britain could develop the same community spirit and social responsibility. The degree of local organisation in many communities is a key factor in

successful, people-centred responses to poverty elimination. Poverty has grown in Britain since Mr Patten's departure. Working partnerships between state and communities in support of local initiatives are a valuable tool to reverse this trend. But to develop them we must spend public money and learn social technologies from elsewhere. Dan Ross, Finsbury Park, London.

Cancer in a foreign field

WE read with considerable concern the article by Richard Colby (Foreign fields where justice withers, February 30) regarding the case brought by Edward Connelly against us. We would like to make the following corrections: Throat cancer is not "quite a common condition among the (Rössing) mine workers." In fact, the incidence of throat cancer among employees at Rössing is very low. Out of a total workforce of some 7,000 employees since the start-up of the mine in 1976, only three instances of laryngeal cancer have been identified. Statistically, these cases yield an Age Standardised Incident Rate (ASIR) of 0.137 for Rössing compared to an ASIR of 5.750 for South Africa, an ASIR of 5.300 for Scotland, where Mr Connelly has resided since leaving Rössing's employ-

A Country Diary

MACHYNLETH: A couple of particularly good titles to recommend this week, one for birdwatchers, the other for railway buffs. The first is called Montgomeryshire Bird Report 1989-94 but it is much more than that. It is a summary of the whole history of the county's birds and shows the ups and downs in the fortunes of many species. Doing better than in the past are great-crested grebe, goosander, kite, golden plover and several others; but there is bad news on black grouse, lapwing, curlew, cuckoo, skylark, ring ouzel, tree sparrow and yellowhammer. This report also includes articles on birds of prey, river birds, barn owl conservation, bird-ringing, etc and costs £4.45, post free, from Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, 20 Severn St, Welshpool SY21 7AD. The other book I've been reading is a much better volume, a highly original contri-

Renewing your home insurance in March or April? If you're 50 or over, just see how much you can save with Saga - call us NOW! You will know how expensive home insurance can be - thankfully, if you're aged 50 or over you can benefit from Saga Home Insurance - a superior household insurance that's only available to mature, responsible people like you. Because of this, Saga Home Insurance can offer you genuine savings over other policies, while giving you cover that fully protects your home and possessions. The Saga Price Promise If you find another comparable policy at a lower price within 2 months of taking out Saga Home Insurance, we'll refund you the difference. 0800 414 525 ext.2582 SAGA Services Ltd. Sagas Services Ltd would like to send you information about services provided by other Saga companies and may pass details to these companies to enable them to do so. And why not ask us about our competitive MOTOR INSURANCE

Advertisement for a book titled 'A Country Diary' by William Condry. The text describes the book as a summary of the whole history of the county's birds and shows the ups and downs in the fortunes of many species. It includes articles on birds of prey, river birds, barn owl conservation, bird-ringing, etc. The book is available for £4.45, post free, from Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, 20 Severn St, Welshpool SY21 7AD. The author, William Condry, is a highly original contributor to the history of an improbably surviving rural railway. As it has for long years, the Central Wales Line still connects Shrewsbury with West Wales via Craven Arms and stations south-west across the counties of Radnor, Brecon and Carmarthen and so to Llanelly and Swansea. It is a leisurely, beautiful journey and in the uplands is quite spectacular. The book, produced by the Community College, Bishop's Castle, is the work of a whole army of enthusiasts delving into the memories of people who over many years have worked on or lived near the line. In addition there are nearly 50 pages of poems. You can obtain this rewarding book, along the Line, edited by Roger Garfield, by sending £7.50, plus £2.50pp, to the Community College, Bishop's Castle, SY9 8AY, making cheques payable to Shropshire County Council. WILLIAM CONDRY

Wheels, appeals and government deals

Tomorrow's Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne takes place amid a storm of local protest, and is just one of the state's controversial money-making schemes. NICK DAVIES reports

IMAGINE for a moment that a newly-elected right-wing government announced that in order to attract lucrative business to London, they had decided to stage an international Grand Prix in the capital, and that without consultation they had chosen as its site the previously peaceful, almost rural surroundings of Hampstead Heath.

Imagine how those who took refuge on the heath would rise in outrage to protest and how they would fight to repel the buzz-saws and the bulldozers. And imagine that this government simply ignored them and carried on regardless, slicing down the trees and carving up the soil to construct more than five kilometres of race track with 18 massive grandstands along its flanks.

Now you can begin to catch some of the flavour of the bitter row that has surrounded the staging of tomorrow's Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne's Albert Park.

The event was conceived by the ultra-conservative government of premier Jeff Kennett, who won the Victorian state election in October 1992 and who was portrayed afterwards in a cartoon in the Melbourne Age intently reading a book called *How I Got Tough*, by Margaret Thatcher, declaring "I can't put it down."

In staging his festival of burning rubber among the swines and roundabouts of Albert Park, he has declared war on the liberal middle classes who live around its edge and on the values they espouse, signalling the arrival of an era in which the only values that count are those that pay their way. In simple terms, the world according to Jeff Kennett means *The Deregulation of Just About Everything*.

For years, gambling was outlawed in the state of Victoria. Kennett's four predecessors started cautiously to open the door to the gaming industry, but Kennett handed them the keys to the city. Victorians are now engaged in a \$20 billion-a-year gambling binge.

On prime land in the heart of Melbourne, a consortium of local businessmen are building a huge casino. While it is under construction, a temporary version is taking the city's money at a rate of \$2.1 billion a year.

The city which was once distinguished by its parks and clattering trams has also become the capital of Australia's sex industry. Kennett's government has legalised escort agencies so that there are now more than 230 companies selling women at \$100 an hour, paying Kennett's government \$500 for every phone line. Kennett has lifted a moratorium on brothels, whose numbers had declined under the previous Labour administration, and now charges them a licence fee of \$1,200 plus \$500 for every bed. He has allowed sex shops to flourish, selling hard-core pornography in open defiance of federal law, and he has permitted the arrival of sex bars where naked table-dancers offer musical gynaecology to drinkers.

When he first announced the plan to build a Grand Prix race track by the lake in Albert Park, his opponents had numerous weapons with which to fight him. So Kennett removed them all. They could have challenged him on planning grounds or tried to prove that his breach of laws to protect the environment. Kennett pushed through legislation to exempt the Grand Prix from all planning and environmental regulation. They could have sued him for damage to their homes by subsidence or noise pollution. Kennett pushed through legislation to block all compensation claims arising from the Grand Prix.

His opponents knew that Kennett had used tax-payers' money to buy the rights to stage the Grand Prix from Bernie Ecclestone, the London millionaire who controls world-wide Formula One racing, and they knew he had pledged more public money to pay for construction work, but all the figures were kept secret. The Freedom of Information Act gave them a chance to uncover the truth, but Kennett pushed through legislation to block all applications for official paperwork connected with the deal.

In response, thousands of objectors formed the Save Albert Park organisation and took to the streets with placards. They turned out to protest as workmen set about destroying 1,000 of the parkland's trees. More than 600 were arrested, but the courts said they had broken no law by protesting on public land. They were pushed through legislation to seal off sections of the park for 17 weeks, so that it became an offence for members of the

public to walk there. The man who stood to earn most from the Grand Prix project, its managing director Ron Walker, was a close personal friend of Kennett's. Walker's company was guaranteed and funded by tax-payers in Victoria and yet no one knows how much public money has been invested in him.

Together with the outspoken media millionaire Kerry Packer and another close friend of Kennett's, Lloyd Williams, Walker runs the company which was awarded the monopoly to operate casinos in the region. Walker personally had earned \$17.7 million from the casino deal, while Packer had gained \$80 million and Williams \$28.7 million. As more money was spent in the casino, other businesses began to suffer. Most major retail industries in Victoria reported a year without growth; spending on clothing had fallen by \$5 million and on leisure services by \$47 million. The Retail Traders Association decided to survey 14,000 businesses to check the effect on them. Meanwhile, the casino announced that it would never close, not even on Christmas Day.

The city's two archbishops have linked the casino with the staging of the Grand Prix. The Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Frank Little, spoke out at a Christmas midnight mass in St Patrick's Cathedral, accusing the organisers of the race and the owners of the casino of destroying Victoria's cultural and social fabric. He and the Anglican Archbishop, Keith Rayner, both declined to bless the new track.

Kennett's justification was the bottom line. "We have a responsibility as a government to try to lift this state out of the doldrums." He said the church leaders were "yesterday's people".

The different strands of "Jeffism" have now become twisted together. Pornography stores are offering a 30 per cent discount to customers with Grand Prix tickets. The biggest brothel in the city now sells its women for casino chips as well as cash. Like Thatcher, Kennett may have torn up tradition and provoked the wrath of many, but he has won the hearts and wallets of those who profit from his values.

And with the opposition still profoundly damaged by the memory of their last revolt in power, Kennett is still likely to win the state elections at the end of this month. One of the Albert Park protesters put his views quite simply. In the midst of a Melbourne Grand Prix weekend last year, his placard addressed his enemy directly: "Kennett, you gormless pillock. And he owes it all to Margaret."

held? A tiny number. So why, you ask, do the 75 council members, in their mausoleum in Chancery Lane, worry about it so much? "It is a re-banging of the feminist drum, an issue they'd like to keep alive for their own obvious reasons. If you complain, they say 'Aha, you're soft on sexual harassment.' Or 'Perhaps you're in favour of it.' Absurd!"

But it's true that it was only when complaints about serial groping by that vice president were made by council member Eileen Pembroke, that the largely male bastion on Chancery Lane became aware that a problem existed within its own portals. But does he accept harassment occurs?

"Of course it exists. But then you've got to ask yourself 'Is it a great problem?' Now, I'm sure some solicitors better their wives, but is it a problem?"

The implication is, of course, that an isolated instance isn't the same as a trend requiring investigation and remedy. Mears makes an analogy that plunges him into deeper water. "If it was established that one solicitor was an alcoholic, would that be an argument for breathalysing all solicitors?"

So there are tricks and traps laid for him, he reckons. But then, as Mears admits, he does sometimes shoot from the hip. And the fight has got dirty. The Mail on Sunday said he was a hypocrite claiming his public support for the sanctity of marriage — he believes there are too many divorces — is at odds with his own situation as a divorcee. His ex-wife was quoted in that paper as saying that he really believed in marriage, but he was a philanderer, who reckoned there should be one law for himself, and another for the rest.

Mears is still smarting from the sting. "You've got to ask yourself how and why the Mail on Sunday focused on my marital arrangements. For God's sake I've been separated from my wife for 10 years and divorced for five. This isn't exactly a case of the Casanova of Norfolk. They tracked down my wife and asked her to give me a glowing reference which, unsurprisingly, she declined to do."

But apart from the personal flack — and Mears gives at least as good as he gets — the big problem is that the Law Society is so ossified in its practices and procedures that it is largely immune to the reforms he wants to introduce. Everyone's transfixed by an air of "No Can Do-ism" as he calls it. "In the past, the Chancery Lane orthodoxy has been that it was more or less impossible to do anything worthwhile. The Master of the Rolls

would object. Or the Lord Chancellor. Or the Office of Fair Trading. Or the Monopolies Commission. Or the National Consumer Council."

Mears is willing, at least, to fight: he wants to halt the grip of cut-price conveyancing by ending professional indemnity insurance which compensates clients if a solicitor botches a house sale. But the tide in the profession is against him. It is, too, in his campaign to reduce the number of law graduates, some of whom are undercutting the market in order to scrape a living.

"Excessive numbers are bad for the profession. We have an influx of cheap labour, and some end up as para-legals"

of the casualties as well as the triumphs of Thatcherism, and says his enthusiasm is dented at the moment. Professionally, he's wealthy enough to have spent thousands of pounds on his election campaign, but says he'll certainly accept £7,500 in expenses when he stands for an unprecedented second presidential year — if the Society decides on this allowance for all would-be office holders. But while he's stumped some presidential perks of office, he has no qualms about occupying a handsome 18th century house in, ironically, Carey Street, where the Law Society lodges its presidents. "I live in a far grander place than this in Norfolk," he says, in his paneled parlour while the butler lays dinner for a dozen in the next room.



Keeping his head... Martin Mears presides over a faction-riven society

Country lawyer takes on the City sticklers

Law Society president Michael Mears has had to put up with some flak but, finds JOHN CUNNINGHAM, he can give as good as he gets. Photograph: SEAN SMITH

JUST six months after he started his new job, Martin Mears is expected to be presented with a gold watch. The inscription was pretty startling, too: "Don't let the bastards get you down".

It's not the sort of memento the Law Society, the venerable body representing the interests of 65,000 solicitors, usually goes in for. For the last 40 years, Buggins after Buggins has been elected president without any contest. When Mears broke ranks and stood against Buggins No 41 — and won — all hell was let loose in the Law Soc's sarcophagus. Since then, he's become so embattled, his friends needed to present a showy token of support.

Almost alone among the professions, solicitors have made their recent rows public. What's more, they're about naked self-interest, and personal attacks on the players here, like the Bar and the Roman chains, promote the speed of their service above the quality of the food. Then there are the crêpes stands, the cafés "formules express" and Lina's Sandwiches.

But some food experts reacted defensively to the survey's findings. Claude Grignon, an agronomics researcher, said: "Before fast-food, self-service restaurants had their time. It is wrong to think France has lost its love of food."

Yet only last week, the top Tour d'Argent restaurant lost its three-Michelin star and the agriculture minister launched a television advertising campaign to encourage French people to have "a taste for taste".

Mr Grignon said: "We are looking at a change in eating patterns, not necessarily a decline. Women work, so they have less time to cook. There is also a move towards uniformity. If you tried selling a real free-range chicken in a supermarket, people would complain that its taste was too strong, its meat too dark and too tough." Frank and Patricia agreed, but felt the survey proved there was a real threat to their quality of life. Frank said: "We are all caught up in the McDonald-Disney-frozen-food culture. What's happening is a sign of over-consumption in a sick society."

"Several of our friends have started eating macrobiotic food, which is a kind of over-reaction to this general trend". And, finishing the last chip, he added: "It's only going to get worse with McDonald birthday parties and an increasingly high-speed approach to life."

No wonder his enemies' problem — a word much used at the Law Society these days of cliques and cabals — is not that he is right-wing, but that he's a maverick.

You can see why they're concerned about his unpredictability. Politically, he's always voted Tory, but is aware

of the casualties as well as the triumphs of Thatcherism, and says his enthusiasm is dented at the moment. Professionally, he's wealthy enough to have spent thousands of pounds on his election campaign, but says he'll certainly accept £7,500 in expenses when he stands for an unprecedented second presidential year — if the Society decides on this allowance for all would-be office holders. But while he's stumped some presidential perks of office, he has no qualms about occupying a handsome 18th century house in, ironically, Carey Street, where the Law Society lodges its presidents. "I live in a far grander place than this in Norfolk," he says, in his paneled parlour while the butler lays dinner for a dozen in the next room.

However, while the law might be a liberal profession, solicitors cover the political spectrum. Whatever their hue, their professional body is fussed and seething with factions. And Eileen Pembroke (husband of the Labour MP) stood against him for the presidency, alleging that Mears had created an unprecedented climate of fear and distrust in the profession.

So there are tricks and traps laid for him, he reckons. But then, as Mears admits, he does sometimes shoot from the hip. And the fight has got dirty. The Mail on Sunday said he was a hypocrite claiming his public support for the sanctity of marriage — he believes there are too many divorces — is at odds with his own situation as a divorcee. His ex-wife was quoted in that paper as saying that he really believed in marriage, but he was a philanderer, who reckoned there should be one law for himself, and another for the rest.

Mears is still smarting from the sting. "You've got to ask yourself how and why the Mail on Sunday focused on my marital arrangements. For God's sake I've been separated from my wife for 10 years and divorced for five. This isn't exactly a case of the Casanova of Norfolk. They tracked down my wife and asked her to give me a glowing reference which, unsurprisingly, she declined to do."

But apart from the personal flack — and Mears gives at least as good as he gets — the big problem is that the Law Society is so ossified in its practices and procedures that it is largely immune to the reforms he wants to introduce. Everyone's transfixed by an air of "No Can Do-ism" as he calls it. "In the past, the Chancery Lane orthodoxy has been that it was more or less impossible to do anything worthwhile. The Master of the Rolls

would object. Or the Lord Chancellor. Or the Office of Fair Trading. Or the Monopolies Commission. Or the National Consumer Council."

comes across very much as the protector of his profession. In spite of the unnoticed, unrewarded *pro bono* work his firm, and many other practices do for hard-up clients. What he can't do is, in fact, for all his interest in democratising the Law Society, money still matters.

"You are asking for *pro bono* work from people who are doing well. You are saying 'You are doing well out of society, give some of it back.' So is he a fat cat?"

"No. No. No. Don't you dare say that. I'm not admitting anything of the kind," he says emphatically but affably.

All right, but as his own firm with 50 staff and four offices, can afford to do some work for free, he must be a *farish* cat!

"It is a reasonable country practice. You'd never get me to admit I'm a fat cat. Ever."

Indeed, Mears the Maverick

ALEX DUVAL SMITH on a growing threat to the national gastronomic compulsion as more Parisians eat vite

Mange tout de suite, waiter

PARISIAN cafés are not yet resounding to calls of "une ptate de bière et un packet de chips, s'il vous plait". But a new survey has confirmed every French person's fears: gastronomy is losing out to fast food.

At Burger King in Place Voltaire, 30-year-old Franck looked sheepishly at his half-eaten Whopper. Every fibre in his body told him that he should have gone to the café next door, rather than spend fr44.30 (£5.30) on a burger, chips and a Coke. There, he got to have a croque-monsieur (toasted cheese and ham sandwich) and a beer for less money.

"This won't even fill me up. You walk into fast food restaurants believing they will be cheaper, cleaner and somehow better because you help yourself. None of this is true but you get caught up in the illusion," he said. Franck and his girlfriend, Patricia, who work in a children's activity centre, admitted that their eating habits were in line with the findings of a survey in Le Figaro this week.

Compared to 30 years ago, the French eat fewer calories and spend less time and money on their bellies, according to the survey. In 1965, the average person spent two and half hours a day at the dining table. Today's figure stands at 1hr 20 mins. The big losers on the dinner table are pota-



Last orders? ... time spent at the table is shrinking fast

toes, sugar and bread, the consumption of which has more than halved. Fresh vegetables and red meat are down by 25 and 15 per cent respectively. The winner is frozen food — up from 2kgs in 1965 to 37kgs per person per year.

Patricia nodded in recognition. "The trouble is, people do not appreciate good food any more. The other day, we had some friends over for dinner. We made a real effort, even with the table decorations. But nobody noticed," she said.

Franck added: "Family dinners are a thing of the past. My old man still goes to corner shops because he says he appreciates the quality but most of us are happy to shop in supermarkets where all the food you buy tastes the same."

Tonight I'm going to the cinema and I will almost certainly have fast food before or after the film," she said. Boulevard des Italiens, a street thick with cinemas, has its McDonalds. But even the French restaurants here, like the Bistrot and Roman chains, promote the speed of their service above the quality of the food. Then there are the crêpes stands, the cafés "formules express" and Lina's Sandwiches.

But some food experts reacted defensively to the survey's findings. Claude Grignon, an agronomics researcher, said: "Before fast-food, self-service restaurants had their time. It is wrong to think France has lost its love of food."

Yet only last week, the top Tour d'Argent restaurant lost its three-Michelin star and the agriculture minister launched a television advertising campaign to encourage French people to have "a taste for taste".

Mr Grignon said: "We are looking at a change in eating patterns, not necessarily a decline. Women work, so they have less time to cook. There is also a move towards uniformity. If you tried selling a real free-range chicken in a supermarket, people would complain that its taste was too strong, its meat too dark and too tough." Franck and Patricia agreed, but felt the survey proved there was a real threat to their quality of life. Franck said: "We are all caught up in the McDonald-Disney-frozen-food culture. What's happening is a sign of over-consumption in a sick society."

"Several of our friends have started eating macrobiotic food, which is a kind of over-reaction to this general trend". And, finishing the last chip, he added: "It's only going to get worse with McDonald birthday parties and an increasingly high-speed approach to life."

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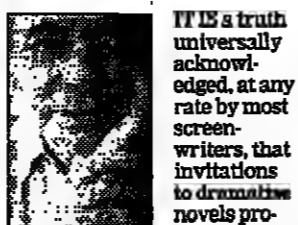
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Cops and robbers

Screenwriter ALAN PLATER has walked the mean streets of crime fiction adaptation . . . and lived to spill the beans



Hard men and true . . . Dalziel (Warren Clarke) and Pascoe (Colin Buchman) in Plater's TV adaptation of Reginald Hill



IT IS a truth universally acknowledged, at any rate by most screenwriters, that invitations to dramatise novels and, most recently, to provoke some of the most ignoble reactions in the halls of creativity: from outright lies ("Well I will of course need time to re-read Trollope before I commit myself") to uncompromising hostility ("Why should I give that best-selling bastard the kiss of life?"). Beyond that, as a long-time thriller freak I've always been game for a whack at any writer I admire: Conan Doyle, Margery Allingham, Agatha Christie and, most recently, Ruth Rendell.

The Dalziel and Pascoe invitation from the BBC was easy to handle. I have been reading Reginald Hill's books as fast as he can write them since they first appeared in 1970. Set in Yorkshire, the novels are about the relationship between a senior CID officer called Andy Dalziel — pronounced Dee-El and, according to the man himself, the only name in the English language pronounced by using only its first and last letters — and Peter Pascoe, a young graduate cop and therefore an obvious target for Dalziel's venom. The cooler critics are bound to call the relationship symbiotic, so remember: you read it here first.

All the best fictional detectives work in twos so they can talk to each other and we can share the deductive process: from Holmes and Watson to Morse and Lewis and, my personal favourites, Nick and Nora Charles in *The Thin Man*, key influences on the Trevor Chappin and Jill Swinburn of *The Bridger's Trilogy*. To be sure, Philip Marlowe walked the mean streets alone, but he had Chandler's first-person narrative to keep him company and sustain the voyage of discovery.

There is a major Nora Charles / Myrna Loy element in Reginald Hill's books. Her name is Ellie, initially Pascoe's girlfriend, later his wife and mother of their child. She is also a high-flying academic who later becomes a successful novelist and, inevitably, is dragged into several of the investigations. In many ways, she is the toughest of the three main protagonists.

As an old lag who served part of his 1960s apprenticeship on the original *Z Cars* programme, I have a ragbag of theories about the cop-show form. The central idea is that audiences are 20 times more interested in spending time in the company of characters they care about than they are in the minutiae of deduction. Nobody really gives a damn about the fingerprints on the wineglass. The simple secret of every plot, as Ed McBain pointed out, is that something happens to disturb the equilibrium of a particular universe, whereupon the police ride into town and restore that equilibrium, with a few capers along the way.

Reginald Hill brings various highly personal and sometimes idiosyncratic elements to the classic form, notably a strong sense of the community in which the police operate. In the first book, *A Clubbable Woman*, the focus is the local rugby union club; in the second, *An Advancement Of Learning*, a minor university campus. There are also traces of what the symbolically inclined might call intertextuality: a homage to the country-house murder in *An April Star* and to the great Patricia Highsmith in *Deadbeats*.

He also permits — even encourages — his characters to be changed by their experiences. Unlike Holmes and Watson, who remain unaltered throughout all their adventures, Pascoe and Ellie grow up, and Dalziel matures, without ever becoming soft and cuddly. In our opening episode he describes himself to Ellie thus: "I use foul and abusive

language. I pick my nose and scratch my balls. I fart louder than is biologically necessary. And I do it all in public. I've got sod all to hide, more's the pity. I do my job, collect my wages, go home and have my tea. Generally in the middle of the night. And I don't know any funny handshakes."

Throughout the books runs a gently subversive quality. The crimes are rarely pure and never simple; the resolutions frequently ambiguous and contradictory. The humour is simultaneously raw and sophisticated. The verbalisms are good, too. A single-bladed knife for pruning roses is described as a "non-secateur".

In translating the books into the language of the small screen, we took two simple but crucial decisions. The first was to tell the stories, as far as possible, in their natural chronological order. The second is more unusual. Because each of the novels has a flavour unique to itself, we made no attempt to impose a house style. The brief to the directors was to find the truth of the tale and work outwards, rather than arrive on the set with a suitcase full of this week's Tarantino licks.

This being so, *A Clubbable Woman*, directed by Ross Devinish, is simple and on-the-nose like the rugby scrum that sets the tone at the top of the show; *An Advancement Of Learning*, directed by Maurice Phillips, nods to the film noir tradition, with a homage to Carol Reed specially requested by the screenwriter; and *An Autumn Stroud*, directed by Richard Standeven from a screenplay by Malcolm Bradbury, is a subtle mix of country-house mayhem and mist over the marshes.

The long-term plan is to make three films a year until the audience grows weary or until the end of recorded history, whichever is the earlier.

There were, naturally enough, a few wobbles along the way. The shooting schedule meant that all three stories were on location at precisely

the wrong time of year. A Clubbable Woman is set around Christmas but was shot in last year's higher than average high summer. Consequently we had to take the advice of Alan Rickman's Sheriff of Nottingham and cancel Christmas. One of the main set-pieces in *An Advancement Of Learning* is a cricket match but we were filming in October at a location without a cricket pitch so logistics stopped play. And the hawk-eyed will have observed that Hill's title *An April Star* should have become an Autumn Stroud in our version — another inevitable seasonal adjustment, but the shroud is intact. We have also tried to convey the visual quality of Yorkshire without setting foot inside the county boundaries.

These three books were written in the early 1970s but updating presented fewer problems than we might have anticipated. Professionalism has arrived in rugby union and student occupations have gone out of fashion, but the underlying attitudes remain sound and true, and Ellie is an emancipated woman well ahead of her time.

One of the sweeter by-products of the adventure has been a first-time professional association with Malcolm Bradbury. We first met in Hull around 1960. He was a bright young academic and promising novelist who'd taken a job on the campus, succeeding another bright young chap called Richard Hoggart. It was a scuffling, apathetic architect with a couple of radio plays hiding under the drawing board.

We have shared the joyful task of dramatising the Reginald Hill books, and aside from an alarming tendency to deliver his scripts ahead of time, the lad Malcolm's done great. With almost a century of writing experience between the two of us and Reg, the inescapable conclusion is that win, lose or draw, this is as good as it's ever likely to be.

Dalziel And Pascoe begins March 16, on BBC1, 8.05pm

For too long arts have been dominated by the visual. Now radio is getting its own back

The sound of silence

Radio

Anne Karpf

INVITED to re-associate with the word "radio", few of us would come up with the word "art". The fact that, to many, art connotes the visual reflects the low place in the hierarchy of senses that hearing occupies in Western countries — like taste and smell. It's almost invariably ranked after sight, even though it's one of the most evocative of senses. Anthropologist Richard Thorn gave his students a questionnaire that asked them to identify the two or three dominant sound markers from their childhood: they all came up with deeply emotional and personal associations — the scraping of Dad's razor or Mum singing in the kitchen while cooking produced a powerful remembered sense of security.

And yet, though the 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of successful artists like Brian Eno and Laurie Anderson experimenting with the aural and oral, we still don't have a cultural theory of sound that parallels the visual. One reason is that sound artists come from many different disciplines — acoustic composers and producers of computer-generated music on the one hand, and on the other installation artists and visual artists moving into sound. Both kinds appropriate bits of original or found sound and reconstruct them into a new whole. Some have ventured into Warholian excess: the Canadian station Jupiter once ran a five-hour broadcast of the sound of paper being torn.

This month at an international symposium organised by Northern Arts and the University of Sunderland, British sound artists played examples of their work. Katharine Norman's digitally produced montage uses silence to make the

listener stop and ponder in a way no traditional radio producer would dare risk. Bill Furlong, the doyen of British audio artists, records people answering banal questions like "where do you come from?" and then edits their answers to bring out an abstract quality that "operates more like colours in a painting. You stop hearing the literal meaning of the words and start to hear something more expressive." And it works. In other countries sound art is to be found in community radio stations. In the 1980s Japan experienced a boom in "mini FM" stations, "narrow-casting" to a 100 metre radius, which didn't require a licence because of the weakness of their signal. Tetsuo Kogawa argued that such "block radio" could reactivate areas and empower people and, to show how simple the technology was, managed in 15 minutes to construct part of a transmitter. In Berkeley, California, Over The Edge is a weekly

three-hour "live-mix" night-time show on KPFA made by an experimental group called Negativland. They recycle audio to material into an improvised new mix, and invite listeners to participate via the telephone. Callers-in can get directly on to air without screening or time delay and deposit ideas and sounds into the mix — musicians can phone in with their own music or elaborate tapes, and Don Joyce brews it all together, sometimes putting opposing callers in the left and right stereo channels, and ruthlessly cutting those who aren't interesting, who are then free to call in again. The end result is strangely compelling.

So far most British experimental audio work has been off rather than on air. But with the growth in ambient music, more and more DJs, sampling and surfing, audiences are becoming increasingly familiar with this kind of work. And from May 14 till 19, the Sound Works Exchange is running a five-day event in which British and German sound artists, experimental composers and DJs will explore total immersion in sound through discussions and performances in London. The sonic is clearly booming.

For more information contact The Arts Depot, 26 Pancras Road, London NW1 2TB.

Reviews

MICHAEL BILLINGTON on Theatre de Complicité's ambitious new work, *Foe*

Staging the unstageable

IS ONE a friend of Foe? Watching Theatre de Complicité's version of J.M. Coetzee's novel that names, premiered at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, I found it difficult to get enthused. In their various versions of stories by John Berger and Bruce Schulz, Complicité brilliantly married physical expressiveness with powerful fables: here they are wrestling with the intractable problem of turning a multi-layered novel about historical truth into a piece of gripping theatre.

The ideas themselves are interesting. To whom do stories belong? Is silence as potent as language? Is there any such thing as historical truth? The adapter, Mark Wheatley, plays fair with Coetzee's basic intent. He shows a desert island castaway, Susan Barton, encountering the shipwrecked Crusoe and his mute black companion, Friday, and, once back in London, telling her story to the writer Daniel Foe (the original family name). Because Crusoe has

died on the voyage home and Friday's tongue has been cut out, Susan inescapably appropriates their stories just as Foe manipulates hers. As in a way does Coetzee himself.

The novel works both as a hall-of-mirrors Borgesian conundrum and a political metaphor for the author's native South Africa: in particular for the way the disempowered are, literally, rendered speechless. But inevitably it undergoes a sea-change when staged. The inverted commas, in which Susan's story is permanently told, are submerged. Characterisation is simplified so that Foe, by paying someone to impersonate Susan's lost daughter, becomes more nakedly exploitative. And gnomic utterances, such as "Writing is not doomed to be the shadow of speech", begin to sound like exam discussion-topics.

The production by Annie Castledine and Marcello Magni strains every nerve to give the story theatrical life. The desert-island section, with its master/slave



Cast adrift . . . (left to right) Patricia Naiambana, Hannes Flaschberger and Kathryn Hunter

relationship and bolts of thunder and lightning, is like a compressed Tempest. Foe's London is evoked through a lowering desk and chair precariously perched on Peter Mumford's fissured mud-caked stage. And the acting is never less than good. Kathryn Hunter's Susan has the desperate urgency of a woman with a story to tell who finds herself confronted by the insatiable demands of fiction. Patricia Naiambana hauntingly implies both Friday's silent strength and belated access of power when he

owns the writer's furred guild-robes.

But Foe, lacking much interplay of character, is theatrical without being dramatic and cannot match the shock-effect of the novel, in which we are finally reminded that Coetzee is the controlling authorial voice who has all along been telling the story. It's all done with great style but Complicité have simply chosen an unstageable book.

At West Yorkshire Playhouse (013-244-2111) until March 30, then on tour.

Ted's triumph

Television

Adam Sweeting

THEY say music comes in two types, good and bad. By the same token,

comedy either makes you laugh or leaves your face frozen. Annie's Bar is a noble specimen of the latter, and has the added effect of making any archaism you're sitting in suddenly feel as though it's full of lumps of cement and broken springs. You're in much safer hands

with Father Ted (C4). The first series made everybody laugh except the Mall On Sunday ("an orang-utan could produce something funnier"), and on the evidence of last night's new episode, Hell, the second series will too.

Encouragingly, Father Ted remains virtually indescribable. Dissecting TV comedy is like painting the Golden Gate bridge — you don't know when to stop, you wish you'd never started and you suddenly discover you've lost your sense of humour — but Ted offers succour to the critic by conforming to nothing: it resembles other classic comedies only by being unprecedented. Not even the fact that Channel 4 are testing Father Ted to destruction by dumping it into the Friday night morass of comedy and pitiful "youth" programmes can conceal the fact that writers Graham Linehan and Arthur Mathews have created an original.

The main characters are still there, is Ted himself, the disgusting and deranged Father Jack, Ardal O'Hanlon's idiotic Father Dougal, and the joke housekeeper Mrs Doyle. But the genius of Father Ted is the way its spirit can be transported to the most irrational settings. This week, the men went on holiday in a squalid, storm-blasted caravan somewhere in Ireland. Desperate for something to do, Ted and Dougal watched the kettle boil.

"The kettle's boiled there, Ted. Will I put more water in and turn it on again?" asked Dougal. "No," said Ted. "I liked it best the first time." Dougal

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OPERA

Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci Cardiff

THE WELSH National Opera is celebrating its golden jubilee with the twin Italian operas by Mascagni and Leoncavallo that launched the company in 1946. The double bill is a showcase for the best Welsh tenor of the day — Dennis O'Neill, doubling as Turiddu and Canio.

The stagings by Elijah Moshinsky with Michael Yeargan's designs are conventional. For Cavalleria Rusticana, we have pretty village pictures not going anywhere, a homage to the narrative conservatism of a John Copley or Zeffirelli that doesn't focus the acting at all. Pagliacci, musically the more distinctive work, gets a less cynical response from Moshinsky. There are more clowns than usual and large crowds of interested audience milling around. The lighting is dramatic, the basic set a dusty featureless yard. The passions are dramatic, the basic set a dusty featureless yard. The passions are dramatic, the basic set a dusty featureless yard. The passions are dramatic, the basic set a dusty featureless yard.

POP

Michael Bolton Wembley Arena

THE last time Michael Bolton played Wembley, there were so few men there that the gents' toilets were opened to the ladies. This time, on the first of two sold-out nights, there were more males around, presumably to keep a wary eye on pop's most unlikely sex god.

Unlikely is definitely the word. Bolton is not just 40-ish and blow-dried of coiffure, he is also — to go by his show — the least sexy creature ever to steamroll through a love song. In fairness to the lounge-suited American, he never set out to be Rod Stewart, and such expectations fluster him. He barely glanced at the young woman he pulled onstage during an aria from Pagliacci (yes, Mike sings opera too). He plainly sees the sex symbol business as a pesky distraction from his real vocation, emoting MOR ballads by the yard. And considering the utter lack of subtlety of his booming voice, one wonders why women do find him so attractive.

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'I may be able to found the Jewish state without any firm support'

The state that was to become Israel was envisioned 100 years ago. DAVID GOLDBERG remembers its motive force, Theodor Herzl

AS I WALKED through the Bab Zuweila, below the dreadful objects of iron and chain which are, I take it, mementoes of the time when this was the place of public executions, past the nail-studded gate behind which the long-dead levitator saint El Mutwalli attends the supplications of the faithful...

By the time of Herzl's 1896 pamphlet, a movement — of sorts — already existed to promote a Jewish homeland. But it was Herzl who through force of personality and compulsive energy transformed Zionism into a coherent national movement...

Herzl was born in 1860, the same year as Anton Chekhov, and died in 1904, also the same year as the great Russian writer. There is a certain similarity in their heads...

Herzl: another Moses, not privileged to enter the Promised Land

HULTON DEUTSCH

Herzl's talents were, essentially, American. Whether as dandy, aesthete, journalist or statesman-in-waiting, Herzl adapted to his role with the easy charm of a saviour of his persecuted people. He dashed off his pamphlet in a burst of frantic creativity.

His transformation from assimilated Jew to ardent Jewish nationalist came as a result of covering the Dreyfus trial for his Viennese newspaper. In France and elsewhere it was a time of rampant anti-Semitism.

It was against this background that Herzl divined his destiny; to become the saviour of his persecuted people. He dashed off his pamphlet in a burst of frantic creativity. Although Herzl is revered nowadays as the founder-prophet of political Zionism, and Der Judenstaat would become its most potent textbook, it is, in truth, a disappointingly mundane and repetitious document.

Immigration to this proto-Milton Keynes would be similarly controlled and effortful. The poorest Jews would go first, to lay the foundations, followed by entrepreneurial settlers and then the middle classes. Government of the new-found land would be by a limited monarchy or an aristocratic republic.

As to its location, Herzl leaves the options open. The vast open spaces and temperate climate of Argentina were attractive, but on the other hand, Palestine is "our unforgettable historic homeland". Furthermore, were the Sultan to cede Palestine to the Jews, they would undertake competent management of Turkey's chaotic finances and become "an outpost of civilisation against barbarism".

Subsequently he would obtain audiences with the Kaiser, the Sultan, the Pope, Joseph Chamberlain and the British Colonial Secretary, and numerous powerful statesmen and influential magnates, laying before them his schemes, which varied according to whom he was talking.

To the Germans, he implied that the proposed Jewish territory would become an outpost of Berlin; to the British, that it would seek colonial status; to the Turks, that Jewish capital would alleviate their serious economic situation; that it only required their loans for everything to fall into place.

There was no consistent strategy at work simply Herzl's fertile imagination. He knew better than anyone that his grand design was a confidence-trickster's bluff.

"The earth floats in mid-air. Similarly, I may be able to found and stabilise the Jewish state without any firm support. The secret lies in motion," he confided to his diary. A precursor of the twentieth century in his awareness of publicity and public relations, he coaxed and inveigled financiers into the forefront of public attention.

In the end, it was his ignorance of Jewish history and the millennial yearning for Zion that would prove his undoing. Desperate to find any haven for the Jewish masses after the 1903 Kishinev pogrom he urged the sixth Zionist Congress to pursue Chamberlain's offer of a protectorate in East Africa.

Many delegates turned on their uncrowned king in betrayed outrage. Leon Trotsky, watching the tumult from the press gallery, predicted the inevitable collapse of the Zionist movement.

A semblance of unity was eventually restored, but at the cost of Herzl's frail health. He died 11 months later, prompting an effusion of grief throughout the Jewish world.

Like only a handful of others in history, Herzl had transcended the none-too-flattering details of his private life to take on a mythic resonance as the personification of his people: another Moses not privileged to enter the Promised Land, but whose enduring epitaph would be his uncanny accurate prophecy after the first Zionist Congress in 1897: "At Basel I founded the Jewish state. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered with universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in 50, everyone will know it."

David J Goldberg is Senior Rabbi of The Liberal Jewish Synagogue, London. His new book, To the Promised Land: a History of Zionist Thought, will be published by Viking/Penguin.



Photograph: ABBAS/MAGNUM

In a family embrace

Al Qahira, Cairo's Inner City, is a planner's nightmare. But JAN MORRIS believes they should think twice before changing it

AS I WALKED through the Bab Zuweila, below the dreadful objects of iron and chain which are, I take it, mementoes of the time when this was the place of public executions, past the nail-studded gate behind which the long-dead levitator saint El Mutwalli attends the supplications of the faithful...

In short, our western improvers would hate it. The health hazards! The safety hazards! The lack of parking! The noise! The streets! The almost certain absence of qualified Counsellors, Sociologists and Planning Officers! But I think that within the medieval gates of this quarter one can discover almost all the qualities that an inner city ought to have...

I suspect the greatest architectural visionaries, the Corbusiers or Lloyd Wrights, might be on my side. In the Venice, Al Qahira has an elegant simplicity of design which makes for clarity of purpose. It was conceived as a fortified palace compound; the palaces have vanished, but the rectangular ground plan remains much as it was when the Caliph's Moroccan astrologers declared it propitious in 969 AD.

Among the tangled maze of alleys a single main artery passes, with several changes of name. It runs from Bab Zuweila to Bab Futuh, from the southern gate to the northern, following an immemorial caravan route to the Red Sea. This was always the principal street of Grand Cairo, one of the great achievements of the world, certainly one of the most resilient, and the true locale of the Thousand and One Nights — ostensibly set in Baghdad but really a reflection of this tremendous oriental capital.

About half-way along stands the great bazaar quarter, Khan el Khalil, as magnetic a focus for tourists today as it was seven centuries ago for the turbaned merchants of the eastern world — still glistening with gold and silver, rich with carpets, sickly with perfumes and cluttered with souvenirs and gaudily and alluring. It forms a compact labyrinthine quarter of its own: the medieval equivalent of a mall, and the well-defined focus of commercial life in the city.

And nearby is the locus of intellectual and religious life — intermittent in medieval Islam, and to some degree in modern Islam too. In a commanding situation more or less in the centre stands the great mosque-university of Al Azhar, "The Resplendent" which has been for 1,000 years the academic centre of all Islam. It has been vastly extended into an adjacent campus, and into a campus outside the medieval city, but it is still the symbolic and topographical apex of Al Qahira.

The fact then, is explicit: the one main highway linking every quarter with the centres of spiritual and temporal life, the whole contained within recognisable limits and given unity by the sanction of history. All around, in lanes and alleys and little squares, in buildings old and new, comfortable and appalling, the people of the city live.

Ah, the western planners would say, but think of the squalor, the confusion, the jam-packed traffic of cars, trucks, buses, bicycles, donkeys, horses, herds of goats — men with baskets of ducks on their backs, street vendors, impatient urchins, jolly smiling women, wandering mendicants — the rubbish, the crumbling walls, the piles of unions by the Bab Futuh!

It is perfectly true that the moment you enter Bab Zuweila the full tide of human life overwhelms you with its torrent of floss and jetson. Colour, push, vivacity, greed, torpor, sudden anger, flirtation, reconciliation, resignation, humour — it is all there, all around you, out in the open.

When I was walking here the other day I noticed a schoolboy, rucksack on his back, sauntering home through the streets, pausing sometimes to look in a shop or laugh at a traffic predic-

ament, exchanging casual greetings all the way, meeting friends here and there, shooed away by stall-keepers sometimes, eating a mandarin, dropping the peel and carrying in his hand a plastic container containing a pair of large and vicious-looking insects.

Far from thinking what squalors and perils surrounded him, I thought what a marvellous place it was to grow up in, with all the passionate variety of human existence displayed so intimately and so frankly, every step of the way.

The great Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz did grow up here, and in his most famous book, Midaq Alley, evoked a glorious east of Al Qahira characters — the rogues, the sentimentalists, the pious, the profane, the girl who ran away to be a downtown prostitute, the matchmaker, the quack, the man who made his living muti-

What might ruin Al Qahira would be the application of trendy western planning principles to its ancient web — the broadening of lanes, the opening-up of spaces, the pedestrianisation of that chaotic main street, which would be a single stroke to destroy both the functionalism and the fascination of the place.

But short of mass demolition, even the most progressive reforms would probably fail in Al Qahira. For one thing the cars and the donkeys would soon be back among the bollards and pretty benches of the pedestrian street; but much more importantly, the spirit of the place itself proves indestructible.

Al Qahira possesses one urban element which western planners do not often have to bother about: the immensely potent force of a belief. Even patriotism, that last degraded

form of religion, need not enter the calculations of town-planners in the materialist west; but in Al Qahira the power of Islam in its most generous form gives the whole place a public unity, and a practical form, that is beyond sociology.

Passing through Bab Zuweila is like entering the embrace of a family. God knows, as any reader of Midaq Alley certainly does, that the family has its fair share of family scandals and disgraces, its black sheep away in prison, its drug addicts, its lechers and its snobs. But the children who grow up in Al Qahira grow up among friends, wandering the city without fear, cheekily, though not innately polite, and infinitely better balanced, or so it seems to me, than children of our western streets, and strangers too, the moment they step into this ancient hubbub, feel themselves to be guests.

Life in all its complexity rages, laughs, plays and asks for exorbitant prices on every corner of Al Qahira, but the grand and fundamental order that lies behind is betrayed in the neighbourly politeness of the city, the courtesy of its streets, the tall and lovely minarets piercing the blue above: and that, to my mind, is what the Inner City should be like.

Jan Morris 1996

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20 OBITUARIES

Jacobo Majluta

A glimpse of power without the glory

JACOBO Majluta, who has died of cancer aged 61, was a political strongman or caudillo of the Dominican Republic. Unfortunately for him, the Spanish-speaking Caribbean nation boasted a number of stronger strongmen. Thus, for all but 42 days — when Majluta was a stand-in president at the end of a notoriously corrupt administration — his driving ambition was frustrated by more powerful men.

His first taste of the fruits of power came when he was given control of the nation's chocolate industry under the murderous, near-totalitarian regime of Rafael Trujillo. Following Trujillo's assassination in 1961, Majluta joined the opposition Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD). He rose fast, becoming finance minister in the nation's first truly democratic administration, Juan Bosch's 1963 government, which was over-

thrown by a military coup after seven months. Majluta was imprisoned briefly before being exiled. He was elected the republic's vice-president in 1978 under the PRD's Antonio Guzmán, but found himself to the right of most of his colleagues. He combined his state office with the presidency of Corde, a massive public sector corporation. The post carried ample scope for enrichment and Majluta was frequently accused of corruption, although charges were never formally substantiated. The high point of his career came in 1983. The alcoholic but honest Antonio Guzmán shot himself after uncovering corruption in his inner circle. As vice-president Majluta took over for 42 days until the president-elect assumed office. This was the one taste of the power after which Majluta was devoted to recapturing those few heady days.

His most bitter battles were with PRD rivals. Having failed to secure his party's 1983 presidential nomination he immediately began campaigning for 1986, building his own structure within the PRD and using his position as the senate's president to carry favour with the right by blocking the PRD's progressive legislation. That campaign split the PRD. His supporters clashed with those of his main rival, Jose Francisco Peña Gomez. After a violent campaign in which activists from both camps were killed, Majluta won the PRD's nomination. It was a pyrrhic victory. So many PRD supporters had been alienated that Majluta lost out to a 78-year-old former dictator — the blind and incontinent Joaquín Balaguer. Peña Gomez recaptured control of the PRD following that defeat, and Majluta was expelled from the party in 1987. The expulsion was subsequently annulled by the central electoral council, but in 1989 Majluta broke entirely with the PRD and founded the Independent Revolutionary Party (PRI). This existed solely to promote Majluta's personal ambitions, which were by now wholly unrealistic. But it did take enough PRD voters to lose Peña Gomez elections in 1990 and 1994 and allow the disastrous Balaguer presidency to drag on far beyond its natural life. After being diagnosed with lung cancer, Majluta sought a political reconciliation with the PRD and even endorsed Peña Gomez's aspirations to the presidency. To many this last act of political generosity was inexplicably at odds with Majluta's otherwise cynical and destructive political career.



Gesture politics... Majluta on the hustings in 1986

Annaes Hodges
Jacobó Majluta Azar, politician, born October 9, 1934; died March 2, 1996

Rear-Admiral John Grant

Fiery spirit in the Arctic ice

REAR-ADMIRAL John Grant, who has died aged 87, was the last British admiral to fly his flag in a battleship. But as one of very few officers to have undergone anti-submarine training before 1939, it was in that branch of warfare that he made his name. The war at sea was at its harshest on the convoy run between Iceland and northern Russia, where Grant commanded the destroyer HMS Beverley. The main natural threat to ships was the ice which formed on the upperworks, capable of overturning smaller vessels unless constantly hacked off. In addition to the threat from U-boats, convoys on the Murmansk route faced Norwegian based Luftwaffe aircraft and surface warships, including the superbattleship Tirpitz. The second eastbound convoy left Murmansk at the end of April 1942. The escort was led by the cruiser Edinburgh and included Grant's Beverley, which had been a US Navy first world war destroyer. With four funnels it looked old-fashioned but had great strength and endurance. Three more destroyers and four minesweepers completed the close escort. On April 30 the Edinburgh was torpedoed by a U-boat 250 miles out and turned back to Murmansk. Next, three German fleet destroyers, with guns much heavier than those of their British equivalents, attacked. The minesweepers escorted the limping Edinburgh, while the British destroyers repeatedly beat off their stronger enemy. Just one Soviet merchantman was sunk and one escort damaged when the German retired after five passes at the convoy. But on May 2

they located the Edinburgh, which sank one of them but was hit by a third torpedo. The cruiser had to be sunk by her own side, taking a large Russian gold consignment with her. Grant, redheaded, with matching fiery temperament, was awarded the DSO for his part in the defence. John Grant was the first male in his family not to join the Army. He went to Dartmouth at 14 as a cadet in 1922, joining the battleship Queen Elizabeth as a midshipman of 17. As a lieutenant he was sent to HMS Osprey, the anti-submarine warfare school, to learn what was then a seriously underrated skill. In September 1941 Grant was given command of the Beverley with her mixed British, Free French and Polish crew, serving on the transatlantic route and sinking one U-boat before switching to the Russian convoys. In 1942 he was back at Osprey in a training role; a year later he joined the operational staff of Western Approaches command. Postwar commands of a destroyer and a cruiser were followed by a shore posting as a captain and head of HMS Vernon, the torpedo school. Grant's last appointment was as the Flag Officer commanding the Reserve Fleet, which he did from Britain's last and largest battleship, HMS Vanguard, completed in 1946 and scrapped soon after he left the service in 1960 with the CB. He enjoyed ten years in electronics, becoming director of the Conference of the Electronics industry.

Dean Van Der Vort
Rear-Admiral John Grant, born October 13, 1903; died February 29, 1996

Bentley Bridgewater Trusty at the museum



Bridgewater... resourceful

THE BRITISH Museum was a very different institution when Bentley Bridgewater became secretary in 1948 to what it was when he retired in 1973. The director's office had only established a filing system two years before and the director, Sir John Forsdyke, encouraged the use of the telephone to avoid needless accumulation of paper. Most of the Museum's business was conducted on a personal basis, requiring the persuasion — qualities Bridgewater, who has died aged 84, possessed to a remarkable degree. Born in Vancouver, he was brought to England by his mother during the first world war. After Westminster School he read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Christ Church, Oxford. He was a talented pianist and linguist, and was coached unsuccessfully for the Diplôme de Service de l'Université de Bruxelles in 1937, and was appointed Assistant Secretary in 1940. Spells in the Dominions Office and at Blechley during the war made him disinclined to return, but Forsdyke persuaded him to do so in 1948. It was a good decision. The Museum became the centre of his life, and he quickly acquired an invaluable knowledge of its history and collections. In the day-to-day work of the office he was resourceful and got on well with everyone. His interest extended far beyond his own staff. He attended promotion boards at all levels, restored the confidence of those who had, and encouraged people to bring him their personal problems. But he had his own way of doing things. For many years he occupied a flat on BM property to which he would retire for an after-lunch nap. His secretary, very willingly, woke him with a telephone call at about 3. He got through his work by staying late, but deadlines were missed and the Assistant Secretary, although finding him a pleasant colleague, carefully saw that more than a fair share of work did not drift in his direction. Bridgewater was highly val-

Philip Harris and Oliver Neighbour
Bentley Bridgewater, secretary of the British Museum, born September 6, 1911; died February 17, 1996

Margaret Courtenay

Saving the day, and the play

WITH the death of Margaret Courtenay aged 72 the theatre has lost one of its most popular and colourful personalities. Born in Cardiff she was the daughter of a talented amateur actress and started broadcasting while still at school. There was a break during the war when she served in the ATS, but otherwise Margaret (Maggie to her friends) was rarely out of the theatre or studio. Her long career encompassed everything from Shakespeare to farce and musicals. Possessed of an imposing presence and a beautiful voice she was compelling in any role and was recognised as a valuable addition to any company with which she appeared — in fact she was a notorious scene stealer and

salvaged many a play with her wit and brilliant comedy timing. There were early days with Old Vic companies in London and on extensive foreign tours when she played Goneril, Gertrude and Lady Capulet; much later, when she had established herself as a mistress of commanding characters, she came Mistress Quickly, Juliet's nurse and other parts demanding that special benevolent bullying which she was adept at portraying. But there were other plays in which she was required to be less formal and more charming. Her wit and charm were displayed in gentleness and restraint. Offstage Maggie was a dynamo of energy. Friends christened her Reuters of Chiswick because she was usually ahead of the gossip

and spent a great deal of time discovering and disseminating the latest tidings. She not only knew a vast number of her fellow players but was informed about who was available and who was not. Notoriously late on social occasions, she was a meticulous time-keeper where work was concerned and a valuable and popular member of any company. Of Junoesque proportions she had great style and elegance, and her arrival at any party (and she arrived at most parties) was managed with splendid effect. She had a knack of seeming to be everywhere, and she had a gift of bringing enjoyment with her. Her loyalty to and affection for her friends was unquestioning — as was her devotion to her mother, who predeceased

her by only a few weeks at the age of 105. Her acceptance of her illness was cheerful and altogether admirable. The lady never lacked courage and was working on various projects until the very last weeks. Her final performance was as the Countess in a radio production of A Little Night Music when she was quite magical. On stage, in 1988, she was memorable as Lady Hayling in a revival of Coward's Relative Values, a part she made her own. She is survived by her son Julian — the only child of her marriage (later dissolved) to Ivan Pinfield.

Frank Middlemass and Geoffrey Toomey
Margaret Courtenay, actress, born November 14, 1923; died February 15, 1996



Commanding performance... Courtenay with Anthony Quayle in The Rivals at the Old Vic in 1978 PHOTOGRAPH: PETER JONES

Weekend Birthdays

IS IT a sign of age when it seems that Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police are getting younger? Sir Paul Condon is almost half way through his seventh year stretch in the country's top policing job and is still only 49 tomorrow. He may feel that the job, which he took on in 1984, has already aged him a few extra years; he raised his eyebrows when he suggested last summer that the majority of young street robbers were black and some of his own more traditional officers are unhappy at some of the changes he has introduced. But his term so far has been, on balance, successful: crime falling, stout words on equality, an unaccustomed frankness in debate and a movement of officers away from the desks and on to the streets. The Bourne-mouth-born Sir Paul has come far since his first posting at Bethel Green in east London. One of a generation of bright, ambitious officers, he was sent on a police scholarship to St Peter's College, Oxford, where he studied jurisprudence. This has stood him in good stead over the last couple of years as he walks the tightrope between a demanding London public and media and a world-weary service. He recently suggested that there was probably more racism within journalism and the print than within the police. — DC

Today's birthdays: Andrew Bennett, Labour MP, 57; Juliette Binoche, French actress, 32; André Courrèges, couturier, 78; Neil Hamilton MP, former Conservative minister, 47; David Matthews, composer, 53; Howard Shiley, concert pianist and conductor, 46; Mickey Spillane, novelist, 78; Keely Smith, jazz singer, 64; David

Willits, Conservative MP, 40.
Tomorrow's other birthdays: Prince Edward, 32; Kim Campbell, former prime minister of Canada, 48; Garth Crooks, footballer, 38; Lady (Marcia) Falkender, 64; Terry Holmes, rugby player, 36; Graeme Odgers, chairman, Monopolis and Members Commission, 62; Andrew Farrott, conductor, 49; Fou Ts'ong, pianist, 62.

Death Notices

THOMPSON, Paul of Hartwood, who died of cancer on 23rd of November, is to be cremated on Tuesday 23rd of March 1999 in Hartwood. Friends of Paul's family suggest that you give donations to a hospital and place them in remembrance of Paul. Funerals by Green Underburnings of Walsley.

In Memoriam

CHILD, Anne, died 3.11.98. Loved and remembered by Frances.
NAMES AMONGST US: A memorial service for Hugh Green will be held at 11.00 a.m. on Saturday March 13th in the Huddfield College, Oxford. Those attending are asked to inform the Warden's Secretary, Tel: 01865 370001.

Births

PETER GREEN and ELAINE BATH: Two are pleased to announce the birth of their first daughter, Eleanora Patricia Green on 28th February 1999.
MTO places your announcement telephone 0171-411 9500 or 0161-824 9588

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Face to Faith

Church without the Crown?

NEWSPAPERS seldom bring good news for the Prince of Wales and this week's Guardian poll was no exception. Only 25 per cent thought he should still become king and head of the Church of England, while 45 per cent thought he shouldn't be either. Until now Lambeth has been able to enunciate a clear line — Charles, divorced or not, is entitled to succeed to the throne and by implication to head the Church. The all-important and deeply sensitive issue is whether Prince Charles chooses to renounce. Hence the Archbishop of Canterbury's unprecedented step of taking a complaint — which was upheld this week — to the Press Complaints Commission over a story in the Sunday Times recently which claimed that he was "ready and prepared to bless a union

between the Prince of Wales and Camilla Parker-Bowles". Increasingly the Church is going to find itself centre stage in the escalating royal crisis — and in an exasperating dilemma. At present, the Church will not re-marry divorcées. The Church faces three possible options: Prince Charles continues — more or less secretly — his relationship with Camilla, without marrying her; Prince Charles has a civil marriage outside the Church; or the Church changes its stance on re-marriage. After the Archbishop of Canterbury's stern back to basics speech on marriage and family life in General Synod last November, all three look equally implausible. Dr George Carey was unequivocal about the primacy of marriage over cohabitation: how then could the Church accept a head in a long-term extra-marital relationship, or relax its policy on re-marriage?

What appears to loom inescapably on the horizon is the dissolution of the link between Crown and Church. Prince Charles's own behaviour has done little to ward this off. He has shown considerable ambivalence about Christianity. With his affection for Laurens Van der Post-style mysticism and love of nature, he has clearly shown he has reservations about the exclusive claims of Christianity — like the majority of his generation. With the extraordinary sense of timing for which Princess Diana has become famous, she announced her agreement to a divorce on the day that her husband visited the Hindu temple in Neasden, north London. In the front page photographs, Prince Charles was wearing garlands and a dot on his forehead. It was a vivid reminder of the speech he had made only a few weeks earlier which was widely interpreted (not entirely accurately) as a call for more

temples and mosques to be built for the millennium. Not to mention the bombshell he dropped in his interview with Jonathan Dimbleby that he wanted to be defender of faith. The Queen is a sincere Christian; her Christmas Day broadcasts carry more and more religious baggage, as last year's reference to an Irish man vividly demonstrated. The quiet ceremonies which symbolise her position as head of the Church such as the State Opening of Synod have an authenticity which it is hard to see her son achieving. Removing the monarch as head of the Church would be a relatively straightforward matter requiring only an act of synod, assured a senior Church figure this week. But it would be an earthquake in the psychology of the Church, as was illustrated in a lengthy article in this week's Church Times. It argued that the moral fitness of the Supreme Governor for his job has not been relevant in the past; occupants have included two Lutherans (George I and II), a Roman Catholic (James II), a divorcée (Henry VIII), and a practising homosexual (James II). But a secular culture has ex-

acting standards of how institutions should reflect their ideals and puts the Church under continual pressure to match up to what it preaches. It is ludicrous to suggest that a monarch in the 20th century can do something because his 15th-century forebear did it. Without underestimating the enormous upheaval of removing the Crown as the head of the Church and the blow to Prince Charles's prestige, there are some clear advantages. The Prince would be freed up to be a more neutral arbiter in a multi-faith Britain. As Islam's followers grow to more than a million in this country and the Hindu community expands, such a role could be vital; an extension of the monarchy's traditional importance in binding the nationalities of the United Kingdom. For the Church also there are potential benefits. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the late 20th century is the profound suspicion of authority. This represents one of the most serious challenges to the traditionally hierarchical structures of the Christian churches. The recent debate in synod on bishops' pay was a fascinating example of how the pres-

sure is mounting within the Church for a flatter, more egalitarian organisation. In that context, one can see the potential popularity of the Church cutting its links with an institution which epitomises more than any other the hierarchy of social class. Madeleine Bunting is the Guardian's Religious Affairs Editor

Doonesbury

ONE LAST POINT, MR. ROY: YOU MEDIA CABALISTS CAN RAIL ALL YOU WANT, BUT THE BUCHANAN MOVEMENT CANNOT BE DENIED!
PAT'S REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE AND HAVE NEVER BEEN REACHED OUT TO BEFORE. HE'S EMPLOYING THE FORMERLY POWERLESS, AND THEY'VE LONG WAIT FOR IT!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU GET EVERY PROTECTIONIST, ISOLATIONIST, ULTRANATIONALIST, SEGREGATIONIST, ANTI-IMMIGRATIONIST, WHITE SUPREMACIST IN THE COUNTRY?
A DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS? PROBABLY... BUT MAYBE JUST MAYBE AN EIGHT-YEAR REICH!



Taken for a ride by ticket agents

Chris Jones

TICKET agents are deliberately misleading consumers into paying too much for their tickets. But the surcharge added by agencies and box offices can be avoided, or at least minimised, by shopping around.

Fans of Lou Reed who want to see him at Wembley Arena in May can buy their tickets at the venue for their face value of £20. Ticket agent Ticketmaster charges a £3 booking fee per ticket on top of the ticket price. Stargreen, another large agency, is charging a £3.50 booking fee and HMV, whose ticket sales are handled by Ticketmaster, is also charging £3.

First Call was the most straightforward about its prices, because its sales staff quoted the face value separately from the booking fee. The worst offender was Ticketron, which said that tickets cost £25. A saleswoman claimed that 240 would buy a seat five rows from the stage. She explained that the company had paid more for its tickets because the concert was sold out.

But Wembley Arena box office confirmed that "there were plenty of good seats still available". Ticketron is described by trade officials and fixed-price agencies as an "indoor tout". Its staff says the agency charges a fixed fee on each ticket sold to it by the venue. However, both the concert promoters and Wembley Arena's box office said the most expensive tickets for the London show would be £20 and not, as stated by Ticketron, £25 before the £5 booking fee.

Ticketron bills itself as "specialists in sold-out events", possibly because its own tickets are the last to be sold because of the extortionate prices. Lou Reed's tour promoters, MCP, were shocked at Ticketron's tactics and a spokesman said "we wouldn't dream of dealing with people like that".

David Marshall, a spokesman for the Department of Trade and Industry, said Ticketron's sales pitch was in breach of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968.

It has been a legal requirement since February 1995 for the seller to disclose the face value shown on a ticket. Touts such as Ticketron can be prosecuted under the Price Indications (Resale of Tickets) Regulations for not disclosing the face value of its tickets when asked for the ticket price and for misleading potential customers.

The first case to be brought to court under the new act, against agents Covent Garden Tickets Limited, was heard yesterday. Director Stuart Cohen pleaded guilty to the charges of mis-describing seats and not disclosing the face value of tickets. Mr Cohen was fined £100 on each of the eight charges against him and ordered to pay £4,539 costs.

Analysts in Hong Kong have already taken next year's link to China into account and the markets remain largely optimistic

Why the tigers still burn bright

ROGER COWE finds all is calm as handover nears

THE optimism of the investment community in Hong Kong can seem myopic, as though if enough people say often enough that everything will be all right, then it will be. But from a stock market point of view, this is not as crazy as it might seem.

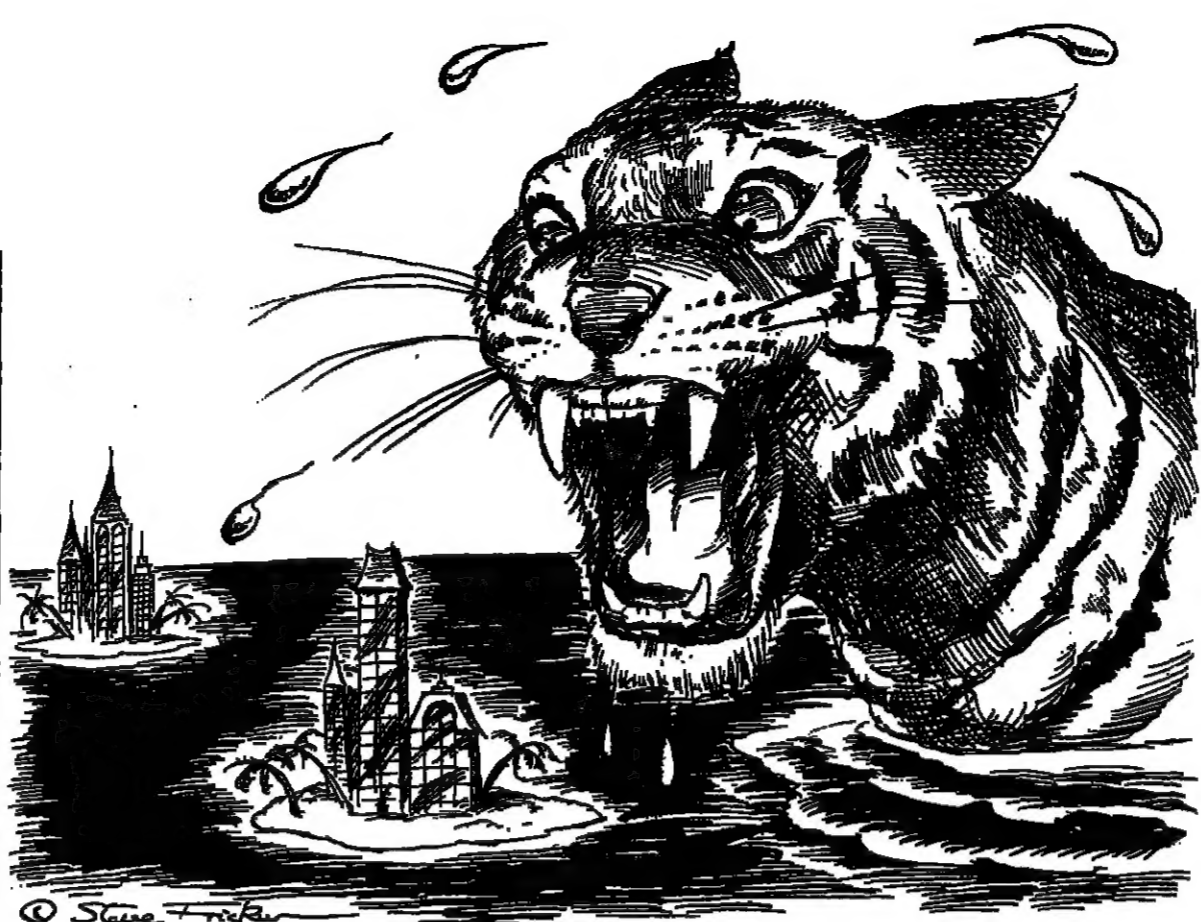
Stock markets generally look ahead, with prices taking into account expectations about future political and economic circumstances, including next year's handover to China. As Schroders' director David Lui said: "It is not an issue that has come as a surprise. We have known it was going to happen for long enough."

The volatility which an uncertain future brings to the so-called tiger economies was illustrated this week when Hong Kong's main stock market index, the Hang Seng, slid 260 points — or 2.3 per cent — before recovering somewhat yesterday. Politics is to blame. Worries about Chinese sabre-rattling over Taiwan overcame a well-received Hong Kong budget, which might normally have been expected to pull up Asian markets.

But, considering the danger of the Chinese missile-testing in the Taiwan Straits escalating into a major international row, the stock market falls around Asia were relatively modest. Taiwan's Taipei stock market naturally suffered the most. It fell 82 points on Tuesday, when the missile tests were announced, and a further 67 points on Wednesday, making a drop of 2.8 per cent over the two days.

However, yesterday the market had already started to recover. Markets beyond what has become known as "greater China" shrugged off the whole affair, perhaps even benefiting to some extent from money switching from Taiwan and Hong Kong. On Tuesday stocks rose in Singapore and Seoul, while there has been little movement in Bangkok.

The lack of panic illustrates the prevailing view here that politics are less important than economics, that the hand-over of Hong Kong to the



Top funds in the Far East, excluding Japan

Unit trusts		Investment trusts	
Five years	£	Five years	£
Gartmore Hong Kong	400.81	INVESTCO S & E Asia Gth	789.73
Old Mutual Hong Kong	373.51	Abbey Asian Pacific	780.76
Old Mutual Thailand	371.48	Gartmore Hong Kong	761.82
HSBC Hong Kong Growth	368.75	HSBC Hong Kong Growth	730.25
Fidelity ASEAN	366.37	Baring Eastern	717.22
		Edinburgh Dragon	265.09

Source: Mitropol

Chinese next summer will go smoothly, with Hong Kong gaining more from being closer to China than it might lose.

Some foreign investors are still likely to be nervous, and that could add to short-term volatility, which is already high by the standards of European and US markets. The South-east Asian market index has seen three huge peaks over the past 15 years, in 1990/91, 1986/87 and 1983/84. Mr Lui's analysis suggests a consistent pattern: over-enthusiasm in the early stage of the economic cycle, pushing markets up to unsustainable

levels followed by a plunge, and then in the second half of the cycle more sober growth before turning down again. Volatility is associated with the rapid development, and greater potential for shocks, in the economies of the region. In some of the region's markets it is also a function of their small size. The total value of companies on the stock markets in each of Indonesia and the Philippines, for example, is less than £30 billion. Even Hong Kong has a total market capitalisation of little more than £200 billion. Relatively minor decisions by large institutions

can therefore move markets more than they would in the West. But Cynthia Liu, director of investment services at Hong Kong's biggest fund manager, Jardine Fleming, pointed out that the risk-return matrix has worked. "The risk-adjusted return has been higher than in OECD countries," she said. Despite all the scares in Hong Kong over the past 10 years, the average annual return on equities has been 19 per cent. That compares with a global 13 per cent.

Such figures emphasise the importance of taking a long view, and that, over the long

term, stock markets reflect national economic performance. On that basis, there is cause for continued optimism because the economies of the region are likely to continue growing at a faster rate than OECD countries, driven increasingly by China, the powerhouse of the region.

China is reporting growth hovering around double figures. And with global interest rates falling this year, fuelling economic growth, most markets have already risen quite sharply — the Hang Seng added 15 per cent in the first couple of months. There are differences from country to country, and all analysts have their own favourites. Mr Lui is particularly keen on Malaysia. Many investors have preferred Indonesia and Thailand, but he believes that underestimates the long-term thinking of the Malaysian government, compared with attempts in the other two countries to short-circuit development with great leaps forward, which can lead to economic and market shocks.

The trusts with eastern promise

UNIT and investment trusts are the easiest means for investors to gain exposure to the Far Eastern investment markets, which have produced some top-performing funds, writes Teresa Hunter.

Investors can choose between 75 Far Eastern unit trusts excluding Japan and 38 including Japan. Alternatively, they have a choice of 15 Far Eastern investment trusts excluding Japan, seven including Japan, and 13 single-country trusts.

Over five years, top of the Far Eastern funds including Japan is Govett Pacific Strategy, which is taking part in the Guardian Investment Challenge. Second, third and fourth are funds run by Perpetual, Abtrust and Schroder. These fund managers are all participating in the Challenge and raising substantial funds for children's charity Barnardo's.

However, the funds excluding Japan have produced significantly better returns over five years than those including Japan reflecting the down-turn in

that country's economy. An investment of £100 has grown to an average £290.34 — compared with £202.60 for those including Japan in the portfolio — and the contrast is even more marked over 10 years.

Gartmore's Hong Kong turned a £100 investment into £400.81 over five years and is also fourth of all 1,078 unit trusts over the same period.

On the investment trust front, TR Far East Income Warrants is top of all investment trusts over five years and second over two. However this is a more specialised fund than a general Far Eastern fund.

Fleming and Foreign & Colonial, also Guardian Investment Challenge participants, have winning Far Eastern investment trusts in the top five of their sector.

Finally, a note of caution. Far Eastern funds can be volatile and are therefore not suitable as a first equity investment. However, every well-spread portfolio should include an element of exposure to the tiger economies.

Pay-out bonanza for takeover society members

Chris Jones

NATIONAL & Provincial Building Society's voting members will receive at least £500 when it is taken over by Abbey National in August, according to the transfer document

published this week. Savers who have their accounts since December 31, 1993, will be entitled to either £750 in cash or Abbey shares plus an additional cash bonus equal to 7 per cent of their balance.

The percentage is worked out on the lower of the two balances on either April 28, 1995, or the so-called "vesting date" of August 4, 1996. Savers are advised to top up their balance to maximise their pay-out if the balance has dropped since last April. Savers who joined later, but before the cut-off date of April 28 last year, will get Abbey shares worth £500. Non-voting members, including those with less than £100 in their accounts, will get a cash bonus worth 8 per cent of their balance at the end of last year.

Shareholders worth £500. And N&P borrowers with loans of between £59,999 and £99,999 will see their mortgage interest rate drop to the new Abbey rate of 7.24 per cent, while borrowers of £100,000 or more will see their rate drop to 7.19 per cent if the takeover goes ahead.

However, only 29,000 of N&P's 400,000 borrowers will benefit from a new rate because the smaller Abbey loans will have the same variable rate as the N&P. Fixed-rate deals stay the same. Members will receive their voting packs next week and these must be returned before April 6. People can vote in person at a special general meeting to be held in Manchester on April 11. Half of all savers must vote for the merger to be approved and three-quarters of

those must vote in favour. A majority of borrowers must also vote in favour before the N&P's business can be transferred. N&P Chairman Lord Shuttleworth says the society's board is "unanimously recommending the proposed transfer".

Given the voting results in previous takeovers and conversions, the board is unlikely to encounter any serious opposition from the society's members. In May last year, Leeds and Halifax members voted in favour of a merger and cash pay-outs by an overwhelming 19 to 1. N&P will give Abbey shares worth £500 to the estate of savers who died before the vesting date, provided they held more than £100 in a share account on April 28, 1995. In the case of joint accounts, the surviving second-named holder will be

entitled to a windfall, which will be calculated in the same way as a sole account. All 423,000 N&P Visa customers will maintain a free-for-life credit card — although they will be switched to Abbey National's new Visa card which normally charges a £2.50 annual fee. And the interest rate will drop from a 21.4 annual percentage rate to 19.9 APR when their cards are replaced.

Alliance & Leicester says it will produce its conversion document in October, a month before members vote on whether the society should become a bank. The society has so far refused to indicate who will benefit from any windfalls, beyond excluding all Girobank savers. Nor has it revealed the structure of the pay-out package.

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SCOTTISH WIDOWS

22 FINANCE AND ECONOMICS

The Guardian Saturday March 9 1996

Inflation jitters over fall in America's jobless sends markets sliding and overshadows Clarke's cut in UK rates

US fears see shares crash

Mark Tran in New York and Paul Murphy
THE world's financial markets shuddered yesterday after an unexpectedly sharp fall in US unemployment figures...

slicing base rates by another 0.25 per cent to 6 per cent yesterday. But with analysts in the City already expecting a further relaxation of monetary policy...

reported "near-panic" as the 30-year treasury bond lost almost three points, sending the yield on this financial benchmark up to 6.7 per cent.

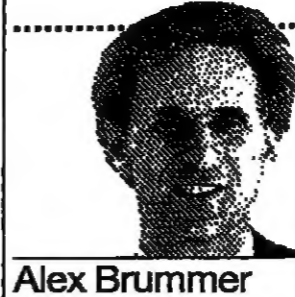
quickly developed that the Federal Reserve, America's central bank, will now leave interest rates unchanged when its policy committee meets again on March 26.

big layoffs for most of 1995 as factories cut back production in the face of excess inventories, saw 26,000 new jobs in February.

may begin to rise quite quickly thereafter. But most share strategists believe that while the British stock market has its own uncertainties to address...

Hong Kong Notebook

All bets are on in unusual takeover



Alex Brummer

JUST how speedily the clock is ticking towards the mainland Chinese takeover of Hong Kong, Britain's most capitalist economy, has been evident over the past week.

this document, however worthless, may help them if life in the new Hong Kong goes really wrong. Chris Patten is seen as achieving a great victory in securing visa-free travel to Britain...

That is why Chris Patten was so coyly correct in suggesting the case for full British passports when he was in the UK last year. It would both underpin the personal security of Hong Kong's citizens...

INDEED, it is Britain's neglect over a long period which has led to only grudging praise of John Major's promise to protect a democratically-elected Legco with every means available.

Compromises will almost certainly have to be made and with each deal there will be an erosion of political, financial and economic freedom.

Over the years there have been bitter complaints about the accountability of British appointed governors. But at long last, it seems to be funnelled back to Westminster.

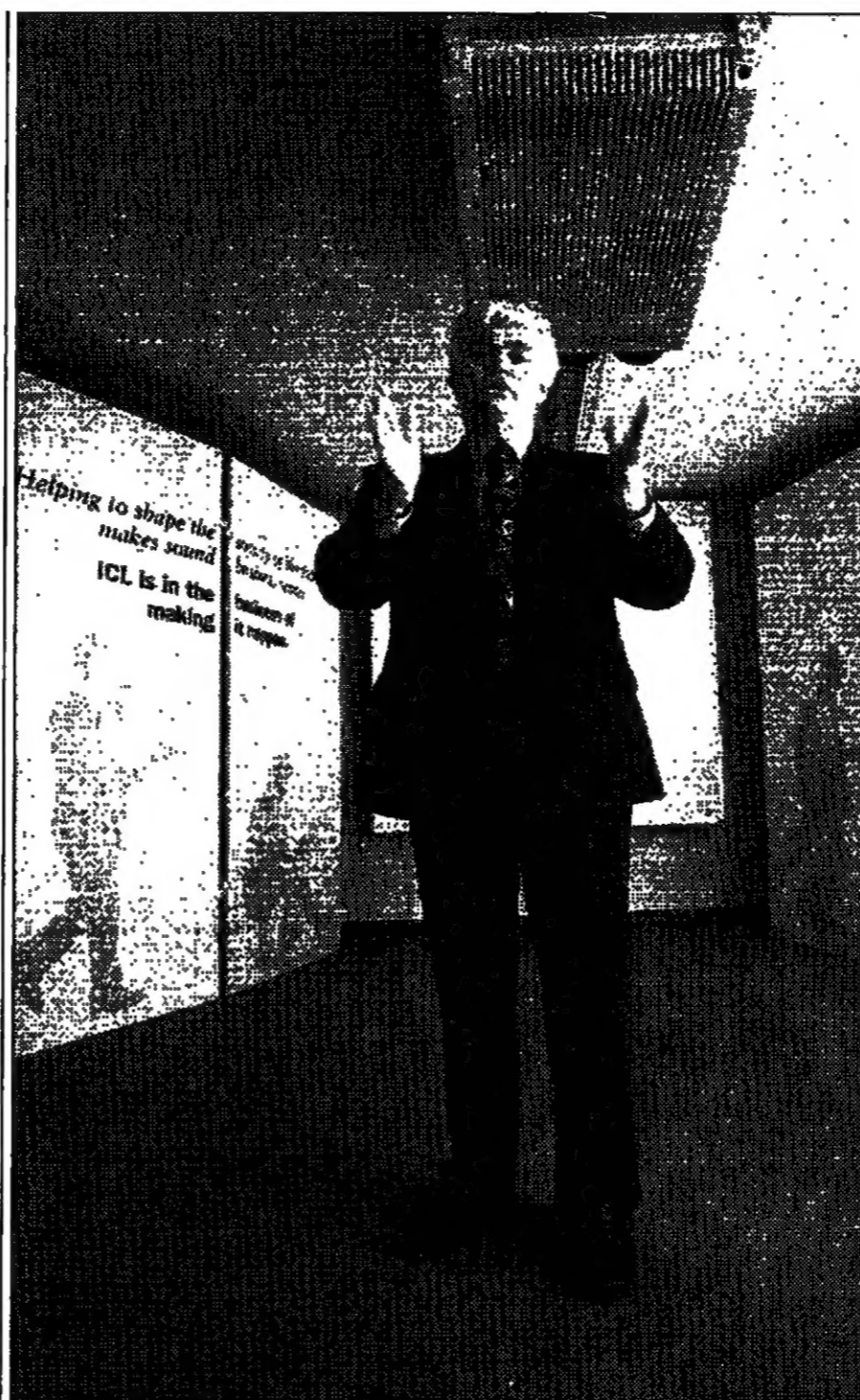
Lloyd's £2.8bn lifeboat will sink, say Names

Sarah Whitbloom

LOYD'S of London's £2.8 billion lifeboat for loss-stricken investors was last night condemned as doomed to fail by Names, although they have yet to see their individual bills for the insurance market's astronomical losses.

looking for a deal closer to £4.5 billion — have rejected the deal. But he warned that the offer is likely to be scuppered in any event because of US legal problems.

checks into such hardship claims — warned yesterday that Names should apply by the end of April for such assistance since there is only a limited amount of money available.



Watershed ahead... ICL chief Keith Todd is eyeing Internet PHOTOGRAPH: GRAHAM TURNER

Cost of cutting jobs means 1,000 more could go at ICL

ICL, the British-based computer group owned by Japan's Fujitsu, announced yesterday a shake-up of its business, which could cost up to 1,000 jobs this year.

from easy" but insisted that the five-point programme would mark a "watershed" in the company's fortunes.

contract electronics manufacturing business. ICL's volume products division, which is to link with existing Fujitsu activities, creating a new worldwide personal computer business.

White Hart falls to Regal hunt

Ian King

GRANADA yesterday clinched the first major sale of assets it acquired with January's £3.9 billion takeover of Forte, agreeing to sell 80 White Hart hotels to Regal, the fast-expanding provincial hotelier.

of negotiations, but I am delighted that we have been able to complete this acquisition." Meanwhile, Marriott International reiterated yesterday its interest in buying the French hotel chain Meridien from Granada, along with some of the old Forte Exclusive hotels.

No run out for Thomas the Tank Engine as Reed abandons sell-off

Mark Miller

THOMAS the Tank Engine, Winnie the Pooh, even Babar the Elephant have been left on the shelf.

Reed-Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch publishing group, announced yesterday that it had abandoned attempts, at least for the time being, to sell off its consumer publishing business, Reed Consumer Books, because it could not get the price it wanted.

Discussions aimed at finding a buyer for its 50 per cent stake in BCA (Book Club Associates) have also been discontinued.

The consumer books business, which includes the Hamlyn and Heinemann imprints and has authors such as Roddy Doyle and Susan Hill alongside its strong line-up of children's titles, was put up for sale last summer.

SFO warning as seven men convicted of £5m swindle

Den Atkinson

SEVEN men have been convicted of a £5 million "long-firm" fraud whose victims included companies in Germany and Holland. The Serious Fraud Office warned that others planning this type of swindle, in which a company builds up a solid credit record then decamps with goods or money — should "take note" that five of the convicted have been jailed.

the creditors to whistle for their money." The dishonestly obtained goods, said the SFO, were fenced out on to the black market via a secret warehouse in Liverpool, where they were often repackaged and re-labelled to disguise their origins.

Yesterday Reed-Elsevier said that it would make "renewed efforts" to return the consumer books business "towards former levels of productivity".

Halifax drops Warburg from conversion team

Tony May

HALIFAX Building Society has dropped SBC Warburg from the team advising on its conversion to a bank and stock market flotation next summer.

today, would value the Halifax at about £10 billion. An industry source said there had been three or four changes at the top of the management team at Warburg in recent months and, at times, Halifax had not been certain who was heading their team.

role of lead broker during the conversion and flotation, and Halifax is considering who to appoint as joint broker.

Table with 4 columns: Country, Value, Country, Value. Includes Australia 1.94, Austria 15.30, Belgium 45.00, Denmark 2.04, Cyprus 0.70, Czechia 0.50, France 7.49, Germany 2.0000, Greece 366.00, Hong Kong 11.62, India 52.00, Ireland 0.9600, Italy 2.340, Japan 1.4700, Korea 1.223, Malaysia 0.50, Netherlands 2.4700, New Zealand 11.25, Norway 9.50, Portugal 228.50, Saudi Arabia 5.70, Singapore 2.12, South Africa 5.83, Spain 184.00, Sweden 10.25, Switzerland 1.77, Taiwan 98.57, USA 1.4925.

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel)

Ford's £2.6bn investment safeguards 13,000 jobs

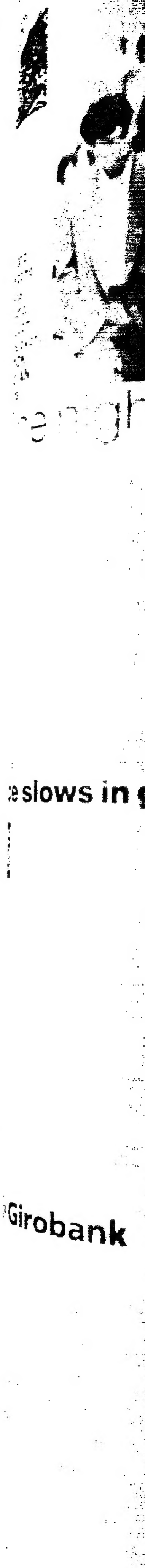
Chris Barrie

UP TO 13,000 jobs will be safeguarded by a £2.6 billion investment planned by Ford for its UK car plants and development centres.

The neighbouring engine plant will also be upgraded to make more variations. Ford said that £1 billion of investment under its six-year plan had already been announced for engines at Bridgend, south Wales, and Dagenham. Some of the spend would also be earmarked for Jaguar.

But the news has reassured the 5,000 workers at Halewood about Ford's intention to keep the plant open. Since Christmas, the factory has been operating well below its full capacity of 1,100 cars a day due to flat domestic demand.

Dagenham is running close to full capacity at 1,100 cars a day, some of them for Mazda. The site employs 8,000 people.





Mainland boom zone fears its industrial revolution may be over. PATRICK DONOVAN reports



New modes... shopping streets in Shenzhen reflect buying power as well as tastes of its relatively affluent work force. PHOTOGRAPH DON MCPHEE



'One night city' pays the price of success

IT IS just before 6am at Kowloon station and the queues are already building up for the first trains to Shenzhen. They may live in Hong Kong, but these hundreds of predominantly white-collar commuters work in mainland China; a journey which takes less than an hour through the rolling hills of the New Territories to passport control at Lo Wan.

a private sitting room and personal dealing terminal. As with any emerging economy, Shenzhen has its share of poverty and corruption. Convicted fraudsters were among 16 people shot in a mass execution last month. The region's relative wealth has brought a sharp rise in illegal immigration. The population has risen from 30,000 to about 3.8 million over the past 10 years and residency is tightly controlled by police permit.

colony used to employ more than 70 per cent of its workforce in manufacturing. But relocating these activities to China has allowed Hong Kong entrepreneurs access to cheaper land and labour costs. Mainland manual workers earn about £1 per day, around one-third of rates in Hong Kong. In the process, says Victor Fung, who heads the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the colony has been able to concentrate on higher-

margin services industries, particularly within the financial sector. These now account for about 80 per cent of the colony's jobs, says Mr Fung. "We [in Hong Kong] are the driving force for the development of the Pearl river area [which includes Shenzhen]. As many as 50,000 Hong Kong-owned companies straddle the region. So closely tied economically are Hong Kong and this part of South China that around 90 per cent of all ex-

ports from the Guangdong province pass through the colony." As Li Zing Sen, the director of Shenzhen's Foreign Investment Office, says: "It is a symbiotic relationship. After 1997, this relationship will remain and the hinterland will continue to develop itself." He says that the Shenzhen has been nicknamed "one night city" because of its spectacularly fast construction rate. Zhuang Xinyi, general manager of the Shenzhen Stock Exchange, adds: "The return of Hong Kong is a very active factor for the development of Shenzhen."

But Shenzhen risks becoming a victim of its own success. As its labour and land prices rise, Hong Kong investors are moving into ever more remote rural areas in search of cheaper land and labour. Warnings about the slowdown emerged last year when the mayor, Li Zibin, announced that the zone's industrial growth during the first four months of 1995 had, for the first time, slipped behind the national average. As its economy evolves, Shenzhen is attempting to develop its own financial base. Does it plan to compete head-on with Hong Kong over the longer term? The People's Bank of China in Shenzhen, regional arm of the country's all-powerful central bank, plays this down, insisting

there is scope for "co-operation". Steps are being taken, for example, to link financial settlement systems in Shenzhen and Hong Kong. Li Zhong Wei, the bank's deputy director in Shenzhen, says the zone's future lies in becoming a provincial financial centre for China. It has already had success in attracting western financial institutions to help service international joint-venture projects. Mr Li wants to expand the banking sector, however, by launching an initiative to open the region to smaller and medium-sized banks. Shenzhen has already had some success with its six-year-old stock exchange. About 135 Chinese companies are listed. Hong Kong-based brokerages such as Crosby, Standard Chartered, Flemings and Nomura take it seriously enough to maintain representative offices.

Manufacturers face long march north in eternal pursuit of cheap labour

YK SO, chairman of electronics firm AV Concept, went to China early. Sixteen years ago, the Hong Kong businessman set up a plant in Guangdong region which now employs 500 production staff and up to 30 engineers, writes Simon Beavis.

you are a small or a medium manufacturer, you have to go to China." Hong Kong has seen nearly 70 per cent of its manufacturers transfer operations across the border, chasing cheaper labour and space, and lured by tax allowances and long leases from the Chinese authorities. Mr So expects to pay a quarter of Hong Kong rates

for engineers and one-tenth for his mostly female manual staff. For toy makers, 90 per cent of production has shifted to China. But Edmund Young, head of Edeltek, which employs 7,000 at two southern China sites, says the main reason he and his competitors went north was because of labour shortages in the mid-1970s. He admits the benefits of

paying about a quarter of Hong Kong rates, but says these must be supplemented by the cost of providing dormitories and other welfare arrangements. For Mr So, the problems are emerging. While the supply of labour is plentiful, training needs to start from basics. "About 90 per cent of the workers are from villages

and agricultural families, most have quite low education and they don't have any knowledge of electronics manufacturing." Already in Shenzhen the authorities are getting choosier about the incentives they offer manufacturers. Fifty-year lease agreements are not on offer any more. "Manufacturing is being pushed further and further north," says Mr So.

Pace slows in great shopping parade

From street stall to glitzy mall, retailers complain they have got more than they bargained for. ROGER COWE reports

SHOPAHOLICS seeking diversion therapy should come to Hong Kong. It is not the place for those who think there are too many department stores on Oxford Street or can think of no worse fate than spending a day at Gateshead's Metro Centre or one of Britain's other regional shopping centres.

was the first time since the 1970s that sales volumes had fallen across the retail front. "Everybody, even supermarkets and fast-food outlets, felt the decline," he says. That is worse than the tough years of 1983 and 1989, when it was mainly the luxury items which stayed on the shelves. "It's been a double whammy for retailers. After being used to 8 to 10 per cent growth, we have seen a fall of about 1.5 per cent in 1995. At the same time, because of the previous boom, rents have hit a ridiculous peak," Mr Miles says.

ing that vacant space is expected to rise just as fast - to more than 10 per cent of the total by 1998. There could be worse to come, however, if it is true, as some believe, that Hong Kong is in danger of losing its status as Asia's Metro Centre. Costs here are so high compared with capitals such as Jakarta or Bangkok that some retailers are being scared away. And a new mall has just opened in Jakarta with enough top-quality names to make London's Bond Street look like a street market.

Hong Kong has just held on to its title of the cheapest tourist shopping centre in the world, as the chart shows. But Taipei comes a close second, while New York is cheapest for electronic goods. For the time being there are still plenty of shoppers on the streets, and retailers are still coming here, including Storehouse, which this week announced a franchising deal with Watson's, the local version of Superdrug. And there is no shortage of names such as Armani, Christian Dior, Versace and Gucci, as well as the home-grown Joyce chain developed by department store heiress Joyce Ma.

But the glamour of their shops is not matched by the ringing of their tills, and it is not likely to be for some time.

Perils of unstable property

SIMON BEAVIS on the real estate crash some analysts say may depress market for a decade

PASSERS-BY had a right to be confused. For 10 years the prestigious Victoria development kept changing. First it was an office block, then a hotel, then it became offices again. Hong Kong has learnt to react quickly to its volatile property sector. For this is a place dangerously dependent on the vagaries of real estate.

for speculators, but so alarming for foreigners companies that some moved to other centres. In June 1994 the government acted. It forbade forward selling until six months before completion, and then based only on 100 per cent down payments. The property market crashed, taking the overheated stock market with it. The boom led massive oversupply. Vacancy rates are forecast to peak at a 14-year high in 1997 and there is a growing recognition that there are potentially serious instabilities in the market which could damage Hong Kong's economy at a time when prosperity is its best hope of continuity in uncertain times.

Girobank

Girobank announces that with effect from close of business on 8 March 1996 its Base Rate was reduced from 6.25% to 6.00% per annum.

Girobank plc, 49 Park Lane, London W1Y 4EQ
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St Michael takes wing at last, but oven-ready meals are ditched

WHAT is the point of selling oven-ready meals if three-quarters of the population don't have ovens?

It took Marks & Spencer a few years to realise that while these dishes were big sellers in the UK, they were not suited to Hong Kong. The result was to stop selling them. Frozen food sections at its eight stores in the territory have also been phased out, because shipping items from London was a headache.

More emphasis has also been given to Asian clothes sizes, although all the products are taken from the UK range.

Prices on 90 per cent of the range have been held at 1992 levels. And an aggressive marketing campaign was launched to promote "outstanding value for money". The aim was to attract younger, more fashionable customers. As a result, M&S is now prosper-

informative:

With effect from 8 March 1996, First Direct Base Rate has been reduced by 0.25% to 6.00%

With effect from 8 March 1996, the HomeOwner Reserve rate has been reduced by 0.25% to 12.25% p.a. (APR 12.7%)

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Finance Guardian

Horse racing and casinos will still be the twin passions in the territory after 1997.

PATRICK DONOVAN joins the punters at Hong Kong's Happy Valley track while RICHARD THOMAS moves among the gaming tables in offshore Macau

HAPPY VALLEY PHOTOGRAPH: DON MCPHEE

MAJOR General Guy Watkins, a former commander of Britain's artillery forces, makes a very odd bedfellow for Stanley Ho...



Hong Kong: Enter the Dragon

spectator receipts to off-course betting shops. With a history of racing dating back to 1846, the club is a non-profit making organisation, financed entirely by member subscriptions.



A win double

as such because they take such trouble to beat the odds. Major General Watkins makes a convincing point. Sha Tin, with its lush lawns and views over the rolling rooftops of the New Territories, may be the venue for the showpiece races. But the real buzz comes from the midweek fixtures at Happy Valley, an oval swathe of green, shoe-horned between the skyscrapers of downtown Hong Kong island.

And, as the major general says, the majority of the tens of thousands of office workers are clearly not here for a social night out. Few of the mostly smartly-dressed punters are drinking. As we wait for the start of Wednesday's Stock Exchange Stakes, there is silence, with most race-goers hunched over one of Hong Kong's dozen daily racing pages.

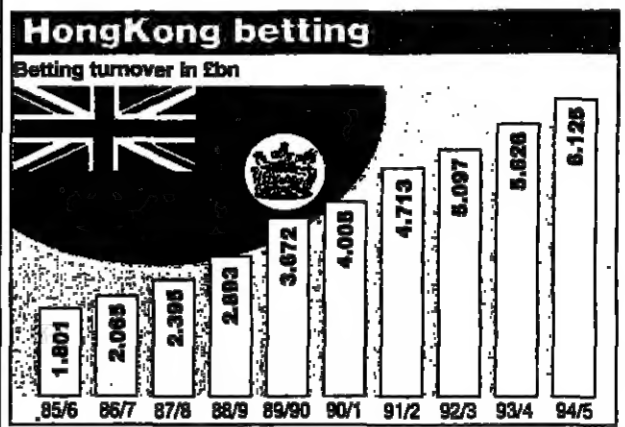
Stanley Ho puts it more succinctly. "Gambling," he says, "is in the Chinese blood" — at least here in Hong Kong and Macau. But Mr Ho, whose honours range from the Portuguese title of Commander of the Order of Benefaction to patronage of the HK Girl Guide Association, insists that he actively discourages locals from gambling if they cannot afford it.

Other prominent locals such as David Tang, the suave owner of the Shanghai Tang retail chain and close friend of the Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family, would go further. He says that the Chinese have a special affinity with gambling because "we are all refugees."

In the capital of gambling, the risk is on the up

TAXI drivers in Macau have a disconcerting habit: they insist passengers ride without seatbelts. Attempts to buckle up are met with a "Nan" and then by refusal to drive on unless you comply.

concentration is intense. All eyes are fixed on the cards. On each wall a light will indicate an incoming typhoon, but it is doubtful anyone would see it.



When you are a refugee you put your life on the line. Mr Tang has no patience with the faint-hearted when it comes to the clink of dice on green baize. With his hall-mark Cuban cigar in hand, Mr Tang declares that anybody grinning over a small loss "is a cockroach".

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Game of the name
20
Nicholas Bannister
HARSH things are done to the English language in the name of commerce. The latest trend, prevalent among technology companies, is to run two words together but retain both capital letters.

Quick Crossword No. 8069
Across: 1 Finger guard (7), 8 Moon man's goal in rhyme (7), 9 Poisonous type of acid (7), 10 Try (7), 11 System of belief (5), 13 Artificial language (9), 15 SE Asian country (9), 16 It is eaten or drunk (5), 21 Exercise with arm lifting (5-2), 22 Bible story (7), 23 Furtiveness (7), 24 Fuel container (3,4)
Down: 1 Theme (5), 2 Acustom (5), 3 Crazy (with fury or grief) (6,7), 4 Pitch tents (6), 5 Abnormal (13), 6 He sought a heart in Oz (3,3), 7 Bertie Wooster's greeting (4-2), 12 Check (horse) (4), 14 Throw (coin) (4), 15 Enforce (5), 16 Type of fuel (6), 17 Greek poetess (5), 19 The middle light (5), 20 Measure of heat (5)

Advertisement for Sunhead Cavaliers featuring a jockey on a horse. Text includes 'Sunhead Cavaliers', 'Butch', and 'second accident'.